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THE LIFE

OF

PHILIP SKELTON

BY

SAMUEL BURDY, A.B.

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INTRODUCTION.

It is natural in considering a book descriptive of the North of Ireland and the subject of which is the biography of one native of that region by another, to go back to the beginning of history and to reflect that Ulster has been a home of literature from very early times and has produced a long series of men of letters during fourteen centuries. The reflection is profitable since literature is a bond which tends to draw men together for their good, and in its enjoyment to lead them to feel united in admiration of the books which are part of their inheritance. It is not necessary to explain how each piece or kind of literature is related to what has gone before it, and writers are often unconscious of influences derived from the country in which they were born or brought up. Skelton's poem which begins:

> To God, ye choir above, begin
> A hymn so loud and strong
> That all the universe may hear
> And join the grateful song.

seems, when carefully studied, to indicate that he had read the hymn of St. Columba:

Altus prositor, vetustus dierum et ingenitus,

perhaps the oldest extant composition by an Ultonian author.

It was a scribe of Ulster, Ferdomnach, who wrote a great part of the Book of Armagh in the first half of the ninth century. Where the art of writing was so well developed literary composition was certainly practised, and the manuscript shows that this was in the vernacular as well as in Latin.

Cormacan, son of Maelbrighde, wrote a famous lay about the middle of the tenth century on the march round Ireland in 942 of Muircheartach, son of Niall glundubh, who started from his own stronghold of Ailech near Derry, crossed the Ban into the lesser Ulster, marched south as far as the fertile plains round Cashel, and thence to Cenncoradh on the Shannon, the chief fortress of the king of Thomond, returning home through Bearnas mor in Tirconnell to Ailech, where Ceallachan, king of Cashel, and Conchobar, son of the king of Connaught, and others, his hostages for the payment of tribute, remained while great feasts celebrated the triumph of Muircheartach.

The poem of Gillabrighde MacConmidhe on the death of Brian O'Neill at the battle of Down in 1260 carries on the series of the literary

monuments of Ulster in the original language. Manus O'Donnell's life of St. Columcille, the northern writers in the poetic controversy known as "the Contention of the Bards",[1] Lughaidh O'Clery's life of Aodh ruadh O'Donnell, and the passages in which the O'Clerys relate the events of their own times in the chronicle generally known as the Annals of the Four Masters, with many other writers of verse and prose, continue the literature of Ulster to the first quarter of the seventeenth century.

At the time when the O'Clerys were writing, two languages little known there before established themselves in Ulster, the English of England and the allied tongue of the Lowlands of Scotland. The former, as was natural, so completely prevailed that the influence of the latter is often forgotten. A familiar phrase used in the Irish-speaking parts of Ulster well into the reign of Queen Victoria illustrates the linguistic view of the original inhabitants. When a man nearly ignorant of the Teutonic dialects was spoken to in English he always replied, "Na Scotch". If his studies had gone a less way still, he said, "Ni fhil oen fhocal béarla", "Not one word of dialect".

No great works were produced in Ireland in the language of the Lowlands of Scotland, but its influence upon the writings of those who wrote

[1] Iomarbhagh na bhillighe.

English in Ulster is easily traced and gives a distinct character to many of the books produced between the time of the Plantation and that of the last Great Famine. These books, though written by men whose ancestors a few generations back came from Scotland, France, or England, show a great regard for Ulster, which the authors had made their country.

James Stuart, whose *Historical Memoirs of the City of Armagh* was printed at Newry in 1819 and his poems at Belfast in 1811, deserves a high place amongst these writers. His prose work is not a mere local account of Armagh, but is a general history of Ireland in relation to the primatial city written with great affection for the subject and knowledge of it. His love for the ancient history of the country and regard for its heroic characters are shown in many passages of his prose and in his poem of "Morna's Hill", which relates the death of Niall Caille, king of Ireland, on the bank of the river Callan near Armagh in A.D. 846.

John Graham, curate of Lifford in the Established Church, was an historical writer of less impartiality than Stuart, but whose *Derriana*, printed at Londonderry in 1823, and other historical works deserve to be studied as part of the literature of Ulster as well as because they contain a large collection of contemporary accounts of events and illustrations of the feelings of the time.

Graham, like Stuart, wrote verse as well as prose, and though he often sank to the level of a street ballad, one of his stanzas at least expressed exactly a feeling prevalent among many of the inhabitants of Londonderry and Myroe:

Full many a long wild winter's night,
And sultry summer's day,
Are passed and gone since James took flight,
From Derry's walls away:

Cold are the hands that clos'd that gate
Against the wily foe,
But here to time's remotest date
Their spirit still shall glow.

When the time arrives in Ireland, as it already has in Scotland, that the representatives of each side in the national contests of the past can take pride in the great deeds of their opponents, then Graham's books will perhaps be read again with interest and with respect.

The *Statistical Survey of the County of Londonderry*, by the Rev. G. Vaughan Sampson, a work containing a great deal of information learnedly stated, has a section on the

"*Use of the English language.*

With regard to language, the Irish is now little spoken, except in the mountainous and retired parts. In the low country, something like the Scotch dialect is spoken, but whether this dialect may be called *English*, I shall not decide. Much

as I esteem my countrymen, I cannot flatter them by reporting their mode of speech, as perfectly reconcileable to the principles either of melody or grammar.

Among their phrases, some are defective, and others extremely pithy, or significant. Thus it is usual, when you ask, 'What news?' the reply is, 'nothing strange, but what's *common*'. On the other hand, when a farmer has substance joined to industry, he is said '*to have a way in him*'. Is not this a metaphor of nautical experience!

I shall not dwell longer on these topics, though I must avow my opinion, that nothing can be more interesting to the moral or natural historian."

The author himself uses many words unfamiliar to an English reader. *Misks*[1] are preferable, whether for pasture or tillage, to *druims*.[1] *Straas*[2] and *hoames*[3] are affected by the river Moyola. An improvement "greatly required is that of draining and enclosing those tracts of low and wet bottoms, which at present, under the description of *rough outsport*, are poached all winter by the hoof, and consequently in summer yield little to the bite of cattle".[4] Made roads are not everywhere to be found, but "passing by the cromlech of Slaghmanus there is a *slide-car rut-way*[5] to Listress". Potatoes were *kibbed in*[6] over ridges "covered with lime and

[1] Sampson, *Survey of Londonderry*, p. 19.
[2] Ibid. p. 40. [3] Ibid. p. 41. [4] Ibid. p. 449.
[5] Ibid. p. 58. [6] Ibid. p. 131.

earth". The Rev. Mr. Torrens informed Mr. Sampson that he had tried lime "in composts made of *scammed*[1] bog, the ashes and fresh peat being added together with it". Countrymen stop at a small public-house, "Allured by the whiskey, they stop for hours, leaving the poor patient *garron* to bite at the thatch, or at his own *suggaun*".[2]

Mr. Sampson has considerable powers of description, and one example will show how he was affected by the scenery of his district:

"All these sunk terraces have the plane of their strata *reclined* against the original mountain; that is to say, in sinking, their bases have been shoved beyond their perpendiculars. From this angularity of the strata arises a diversity of picture singularly delightful. It was a fine evening, when I made these observations; the sun was declined to the west, gilding the verges of the Innishowen range beyond Lough Foyle; the rays were shot almost horizontally between the sublime precipices and the fallen masses. Benyevenagh, with all his outline, seemed projected on the mellow sky. Ruined spires, fallen castles, with a thousand imaginary similitudes, delighted, pressed, and overawed the contemplative mind."

It would be easy to mention other writers of Ulster, but this is not the place to attempt a history of them, and these examples are sufficient to show the variety of literature which is to be found there,

[1] Ibid. p. 172. [2] Ibid. p. 203.

among which are few books better worth reading than Samuel Burdy's Life of Philip Skelton. Lord Macaulay praised it to Whitwell Elwin as a delightful biography and an admirable picture of the life of its period in Ireland. The Reverend Doctor William Reeves,[1] whose erudition and taste are shown in his edition of Adamnan's Life of St. Columba, in that of Primate Colton's Visitation, in his Antiquities of Down, Connor and Dromore, and in many lesser works, had visited the places of Skelton's preferments and at one time thought of reprinting Burdy's book, but failed to find much in relation to its author except the confirmation of the dates of Burdy's academic and professional careers and of two leases granted by him, one when curate of Ardglass on September 24, 1799, to James Gardner of Dromore, and the other when of Cloughey in the parish of Kilclief to Peter Brannan, brogue-maker, on July 6, 1809.

Burdy was descended from a Huguenot soldier, who was wounded at the battle of the Boyne, of whom in some lines[2] on the death of a friend he says:

[1] On the margin of my copy of the *Memoirs of the Earl of Charlemont*, by Francis Hardy, vol. i, p. 11, Dr. John Jebb, bishop of Limerick, Ardfert and Aghadoe, has written, "This is but a very slight notice of one of the most remarkable men that the Irish Church has had". The words are, "Mr. Skelton a respectable clergyman".

[2] A Monody on the death of Mr. James Agnew, linen-

Our common grandsire left fair Gallia's land,
Forc'd from her plains by Lewis' stern command,
Join'd great Prince-William on Batavia's shore,
At Boyne's fam'd waters heard the cannon roar.

Bishop Reeves expressed in conversation the opinion that Burdy was probably an altered form of Dubourdieu, a name found in the north of Ireland and known as that of the author of the *Statistical Survey of the County of Antrim.*

Samuel, the son of Peter Burdy, was born at Dromore, Co. Down, and entered Trinity College, Dublin, as a sizar March 22, 1777, won a Scholarship in 1780, and took his B.A. degree in 1781. In 1783 he was ordained, and was appointed to the curacy, in the Established Church, of Ardglass, a small seaside town six miles from Downpatrick. The town had once been important, but when Burdy went there its houses were chiefly thatched cottages, with five ruined castles, remains of its former grandeur.

"The great antiquity of the place", says Burdy, "the heroic deeds there performed, its former "splendid dignity, its present dismal appearance, "the old and ruined castles, the bold and rocky "shore, and the extensive prospect both of sea and "land, naturally excite poetic ideas and language. "All these, it may be supposed, had a sensible

draper of Moss-vale, near Lisburn, who died on the 19th of March, 1798, aged fifty-one.

"effect on me, who, during the sixteen years that "I was curate of the parish, frequently spent the "summers in that romantic situation."[1]

While at Ardglass the curate, who had been introduced by the Provost of Trinity College to Percy, then bishop of Dromore, fell in love with the bishop's daughter. He saw in her :

"Such pleasing sweetness, such a graceful air,
"Such sense as seldom happens to the fair."[2]

She seems to have returned his affection :

"Sure you must own by every art you strove
"To warm my bosom with a mutual love ;
"Your looks, your sighs, your tears, your words confest
"The tender passion in your gentle breast."[3]

Bishop Percy was displeased, and excluded Burdy from his house for a long time :

"an exile doom'd to stay
"By the rough shore of the resounding sea ;
"Banish'd from thee, whose smiles alone impart
"A soothing med'cine to an aking heart."[4]

At length the curate wrote a letter[5] of manly

[1] *Ardglass or the ruined castles* ; Dublin, 1802 ; p. xxvi.
[2] To Belinda. [3] The disappointed lover's LAMENTATION.
[4] To Belinda.
[5] Printed in *Illustrations of the Literary History of the Eighteenth Century*, by John Bowyer Nichols ; London, 1858, vol. viii.

apology, but without renouncing his attachment. He never married.

"Corbally, near Downpatrick, July 30th, 1785.

My Lord,

Since I have been excluded for more than this twelve months past from the honour of a personal interview with your Lordship, it was after no small doubt and perplexity I could at length prevail on myself to trouble your Lordship with this letter, which will indeed be an unexpected, and, like its author, I am afraid an unwelcome visitant.

It is not with an intent to solicit any favour or preferment, which it would be presumption in me to ask, and propriety in you to refuse, that I now take the liberty of writing to your Lordship, but merely with a desire to express my sorrow at my having ever been so unfortunate as to excite in the least your Lordship's displeasure against me. Bound as I am to you in many cases by the ties of gratitude for the kindnesses I have received, I cannot surely be unconcerned with respect to the opinion your Lordship should please to entertain of me. My first introduction into the Church was owing to your Lordship's warm recommendation; it was expressed with the ardour of a friend, and not with the cold indifference of a stranger. Afterwards, too, at my own request, you applied to a certain gentleman in my favour, who was qualified to judge of no other merit or distinction but what fortune can bestow, and to whom I am happy I never was obliged. You then voluntarily ordained me a priest without any solicitations of

mine, and on that occasion condescended to stamp with your approbation the sermon I hastily composed in obedience to your Lordship's commands. This I should prefer to the unmeaning applause of whole giddy multitudes, who in general have no penetration to discover, and no taste to distinguish, real desert. The elegance of your own writings, which have so often delighted the age, gives you a just claim to determine on the merit of others—

'Let those praise others whom themselves excel,
And censure freely who have written well.'

The kind attention and civilities I have frequently met with from your Lordship and amiable family, have made, I must own, an impression on my breast too deep to be easily effaced. My respect, it is true, on that account might have hurried me into some irregularities and errors, to which all of us, in this frail state of humanity, are in a greater or less degree liable. *For who can tell how often he offendeth?* Your Lordship will therefore, I hope, pardon my errors, into which I have been betrayed by a natural sensibility of heart, and by a mind too apt to be affected with objects that are worthy of eminent admiration and esteem. And indeed that man must be divested of the feelings of a man, whose soul can be insensible to the most charming part of the creation.

I have much reason to request your Lordship's indulgence for having recourse to this method in striving to regain your Lordship's favour, the want of which I should always consider as a singular misfortune of my life. I might, it is true, stretch

out my letter to a much wider extent by a variety of arguments, which the nature of my subject would easily afford, if I were not unwilling to intrude on your precious time. For whilst your Lordship is busily employed in works of elegance and taste, in the encouragement of industry and manufactures, in diffusing wealth, prosperity and religion everywhere around you, as far as your influence extends, I must be injurious to the interests of the community, should I in the least divert your attention from objects of such importance. *In publica commoda peccem, si longo sermone morer tua tempora.*

I am, my Lord, with very great respect, your Lordship's often obliged and most dutiful servant,

SAML. BURDY."

Percy had a fine library, as may be seen from the books which came from it and now form a valuable part of the library at Caledon. He allowed Burdy to borrow books from it, as is shown by a later letter to the bishop:

"October 4, 1794.

MR. BURDY'S dutiful respects to the Lord Bishop of Dromore, and returns Cave's Lives of the Fathers with thanks. There is one copy of Skelton's Life coming from Dublin, which he has ordered to be sent to his Lordship. Possibly a few more may be picked up among the different booksellers and others appointed to sell them.

There is a great clamour raised against this book by certain interested persons, especially the Methodists, one of whom has published a virulent

pamphlet against it, which possibly may be taken notice of. Another has written a poem against Mr. B. which is not yet published. The Monthly Reviewers seem rather offended with him for throwing out some sarcasms on reviewers in general, and on the Rev. Mr. Lindsey in particular, whom he understood afterwards to be a reviewer. They, however, allow him a good deal of credit, own the book 'is calculated to serve the cause of virtue', but say it 'is written in the *Irish dialect*, which frequently gives a grammatical inaccuracy to the expression'. Yet in their various quotations they did not, or could not, point out one single instance of impropriety."[1]

Kilclief, a perpetual curacy in the Co. Down, was the only further ecclesiastical preferment Burdy attained.

He came to know Skelton in 1781 and continued during the remaining seven years of that clergyman's life to love and admire him. After Skelton's death Burdy visited many of the places in which his friend had lived, and in 1792 published by subscription in Dublin the book here reprinted. There were 683 subscribers for some 704 copies, and a large proportion of the names belong to the north of Ireland.

It is pleasant to observe that the literary instincts of the Bishop of Dromore led him to subscribe for six copies in spite of his former domestic differences

[1] Nichols, *Illustrations*, vol. viii.

with the author. The price of the book was three shillings and sixpence Irish, the Irish shilling standing for thirteen-pence. The last sentence of the advertisement seems to indicate that he had met with some repulses from the great in making up his subscription list: "I cannot omit the opportunity of expressing my gratitude to all my subscribers who, though not distinguished in general by splendid titles, stations, or fortunes, are at least plain honest men, encouragers of literature in their own native land."

The book was attacked for its rusticity, as Burdy's letter shows, and the author successfully [1] defended himself in "A Vindication of Burdy's Life of Skelton in answer to an angry pamphlet entitled Observations, &c., in a letter addressed to its Author by one who stiles himself a 'Lover of Truth and Common Sense', by Detector". 12mo. pp. 59. Dublin, 1795.

Burdy died in 1820, and is buried, if the requests of his last will [2] were carried out, on the north side of the church of Kilclief.

His other prose works are two veracious but

[1] *Monthly Review*, vol. xviii, September 1795, p. 112. I only know this pamphlet from the notice in the *Monthly Review*. Bishop Reeves told me that though he had looked for it in many libraries he had never discovered a copy.

[2] Copy of will October 27, 1819, made by the Rev. William Reynell, B.D., and kindly lent by him to me.

not profound or interesting histories : "A short account of the Affairs of Ireland during the years 1783, 1784 and part of 1785," published in London in 1792. This was a letter written to a fellow student in America in 1785. The other was "A History of Ireland", published at Edinburgh in 1817. His volume of poems appeared at Dublin in 1802, entitled "Ardglass or the Ruined Castles : also the Transformation, with some other poems". The transformation is that of a jail in Downpatrick into a comfortable hotel. These poems are of interest from the light they throw upon the life and opinions of the author. They show that he thought that he deserved more promotion than he had received.

> My service treated, and my studious pain,
> With cold neglect or insolent disdain,
> No friend t' assist me, and no patron smile,
> No gift to sooth my literary toil.[1]

Another passage displays his serious view of his pastoral charge :

> Show my dear flock that life 's a little span,
> Teach them their duty both to God and man,
> Their sorrows sooth, exalt their hopes above,
> To the pure regions of eternal love ;
> Suit my own life to holy precepts given,
> And point the road that surely leads to heaven.[2]

[1] *Ardglass*, p. 36.
[2] Ibid.

He was friendly to all men, but felt more reason to care for those of his own station in life than for the great ones of the nation and the University. In Dublin, he says, it was the merchants from whom he received most kindness :[1]

> Who showed me this civility ?
> None of your great nobility,
> None of your high-bred quality,
> So fam'd for hospitality,
> Nor those renowned for learning,
> Of merit so discerning.
>
> Oh ! no ! elate with empty pride,
> They pass'd me by with haughty stride,
> Nor deign'd to hear a tuneful swain,
> Or only heard him with disdain.

Many passages in his Life of Skelton set forth his views of men and of life, and the whole book shows how capable he was of true friendship and of gratitude. Skelton was the man he admired most of all the men he met, but he had warm feelings for many others, among them for Matthew Young, his tutor in Trinity College. This Protestant divine, afterwards Professor of Natural Philosophy and in 1799 bishop of Clonfert, was an active-minded mathematician, with some taste for patristic theology, and of wide general learning which included a knowledge of the Irish language. Burdy

[1] "On my leaving Dublin in the summer of 1792."

admired his attainments and his fortitude in a very painful illness of five months which ended his life on November 28, 1800. "Had he lived I would have dedicated my little volume of poems to him, not in hopes of future favours, but through gratitude for favours received."[1]

Burdy's Life of Skelton deals with daily life and not with political events, yet parts of it may be clearer to the reader if the state of Ulster in the time of Skelton (1707–87) is briefly set forth.

When he was a child men were living who had heard from their grandfathers of the battle of Benburb, within sight of Armagh, in 1597, when O'Neill defeated the English army; and of the second battle in 1598 when in the same district O'Neill routed and slew Marshal Bagnall, and of the ultimate complete victory of the English in Ireland under Lord Mountjoy. The flight of O'Neill and O'Donnell took place just one hundred years before Skelton's birth, and was followed by the Plantation of Ulster and the settlement in the six escheated counties[2] of numerous English and Scottish families. Down, where both Skelton and Burdy were born, was not one of these, but had already become the home of many

[1] Note to *Ardglass*.

[2] Donegal, Coleraine or Londonderry, Tyrone, Fermanagh, Armagh and Cavan.

immigrants from Scotland and England both upon conquered lands and lands still held by Irish landowners. In his childhood a few men were living who remembered the rising of the Irish on Saturday, October 23, 1641,[1] and the long years of war that followed it.

When Skelton went to school, and even after he entered the University, many men were still alive who remembered the events of the war between King William and King James, the siege of Derry and its relief, the battle of the Boyne, the flight of James, the battle of Aughrim, the siege and the treaty of Limerick.

The enactments against the Catholic religion and Catholics which, in spite of the terms of the treaty, followed the victory of William, existed throughout Skelton's life, and did all that laws could do to deprive of their civil rights and religious liberty a large majority of the inhabitants of Ireland. The Catholic clergy had to go abroad for their education. The Catholic archbishops and bishops were proscribed, and rewards were offered for the conviction of any person who concealed these prelates or showed them hospitality. Catholic churches were forbidden to be opened, and the

[1] In the North of Ireland this was called *the Rebellion* in my boyhood. The rising of 1798 was there called *the Turnout*, and its result was expressed by the phrase "the country was beat".

Catholic population heard Mass and received Holy Communion in the recesses of bogs and mountains or in private houses.

In Ulster the Catholics were the majority of the population, and in the minority, besides the members of the Established Church, there were many Presbyterians, some Methodists, and some smaller sects. There were Protestant dissensions not dependent upon differences of theological opinion. In 1763 many of the Established clergy had to quit their parishes in consequence of the riotous proceedings of the Oak boys, or Hearts of Oak. These were bands of Protestants who objected to the method of collecting tithes and to the county cess, a tax assessed by the Grand Jury. They compelled the clergy to swear to a maximum limit of tithe and the grand jurors to a moderation of cess.

The Established Church in Ireland in the eighteenth century was in a most unhappy position. It owed its possessions to the sword, and was maintained in its position by penal laws behind which stood the conquering force of another nation. Its bishops were appointed by a Minister of State, who usually cared little for religion and nothing for Ireland. "I hope", writes Primate Boulter to the Duke of Newcastle on February 18, 1726, "nobody will be sent hither from the Bench in England for being restless or good for nothing

there," and the same request is repeated in other of his letters.[1]

A large proportion of the patronage was in the hands of the bishops, yet there were many worthy men among the parochial clergy of the Establishment. One great character in fiction is drawn from a knowledge of the Irish Protestant clergy—the Vicar of Wakefield, and that the virtues of Dr. Primrose existed in Ireland is shown by Burdy's Life of Skelton. Skelton placed no limit upon the charity which he exercised, and his wisely administered beneficence extended to Catholics and to Presbyterians and Methodists, as well as to his own parishioners. He was inflexibly upright and independent, considerate of the consciences of others, and determined in resistance to oppression.

His first preferment, the parish of Templecarn, is to this day a wild region which contains the little town of Pettigo through which numbers of pilgrims proceed on their way to an island in Lough Derg, where they perform devotions, listen to sermons, have spiritual conferences, hear Mass, and receive Holy Communion. Skelton knew the Catholic bishop and the prior who presided on the island, and though his education made it hard for him to understand their intentions and aims he seems to have felt a regard for their piety. It was probably in his conversation with them that he came across

[1] Hugh Boulter, D.D., *Letters*. Dublin, 1770; vol. i, p. 111.

a copy of the *Trias Thaumaturga* of Colgan[1] of 1645 and read therein the hymn of Columba, which seems to have been in his mind while he was writing the poem quoted at the beginning of this introduction. Skelton found his own parishioners in this desolate region without instruction as to the existence of a Creator, and ignorant of the elementary truths of Christianity. He twice sold his library to feed the poor, first at Pettigo and then at Fintona. These and all his other good deeds are admirably told in the Life. He is still remembered at Pettigo, where a cottage he lived in may yet be seen in the street which leads towards Lough Derg. He dwelt in Pettigo for nine years. I first visited the place about one hundred and twenty years after he left it. It was a summer evening, and I walked through the town till I saw a ruined castle. Turning into a field in which this stood I found a man collecting cattle to drive them home. As we walked back towards Pettigo I asked him if he had ever heard of the Reverend Philip Skelton. "Who has not heard of him in Pettigo!" he replied; "I will show you a little further on the house in which the people lived who served him up the turkey with its entrails in it."

[1] The library ΤΟ ΤΗΣ ΨΥΧΗΣ ΙΑΤΡΕΙΟΝ at Armagh was opened in 1771, but its copy of Colgan was added by Dr. Reeves, who purchased it at the sale of the books of John O'Donovan, the editor of the *Annals of the Four Masters*.

"Are the family still existing?" I asked. "Yes," he said, "but they make out now that they were very grand then; I cannot see how that can be." Then I asked where was Castle Caldwell, in which Sir James Caldwell lived whom Skelton used to visit, and the man pointed out the direction.

Nearly forty years passed by and I found myself again in Pettigo, the guest of its hospitable owner and his wife. We visited Castle Caldwell, and admired the view thence over Lough Erne and the remains of the fine timber of the demesne. The house itself was in a ruinous condition. The ceiling of the room had fallen down in which one person of quality told Skelton that there were two Gods and another that there were three, and in which a third only made a genteel bow when asked a question in theology.

The number of pilgrims to Lough Derg who pass through Pettigo is greater than in the time of Skelton. His present successor in the living of Templecarn having caught three fine trout, left them in the town for the Friday dinner of a Catholic stranger. Thus have both piety and charity increased, and the memory of Skelton remains green in Pettigo.

THE

LIFE

OF THE LATE

REV. *PHILIP SKELTON*,

WITH SOME

CURIOUS ANECDOTES:

BY SAMUEL BURDY, A.B.

Virtus post funera vivit.

DUBLIN:

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR,

And sold by *WILLIAM JONES*, No. 86, DAME-STREET.

M, DCC, XCII.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE expense occasioned by my travelling through different parts of Ireland to collect materials for this book obliged me to publish it by subscription. At first I imagined the price of it would be only half a crown; but the unexpected increase of materials by means of my travels, and the unexpected rise both of paper and printing (especially as I was resolved to print it on a fair good paper) made it necessary for me to fix the price at 3*s.* $9\frac{1}{2}d$. *If I may judge of the sentiments of the rest of my subscribers by those to whom I have already spoken on this subject, they will be fully satisfied of the reasonableness of its price. And here I cannot omit the opportunity of expressing my gratitude to all my subscribers, who, though not distinguished, in general, by splendid titles, stations or fortunes, are at least plain honest men, encouragers of literature in their own native land.*

PREFACE.

THE following narrative will not, I hope, be deemed unworthy of notice in an age so attentive to productions of a similar nature. The person who is the subject of it has published, it is well known, seven octavo volumes, which, though not among the most perfect of their kind, on the whole, possess such merit as proves him a man of genius. Besides, to write so much in defence of religion and virtue demands, I should think, some gratitude from those who are influenced by a regard for the most important interests of mankind. The learned works of that most worthy man, his eminent abilities as a preacher, his other uncommon exertions in his ministerial capacity, the singularity of his character, the strict purity of his conduct, and his surprising charities, taken all together, made him perhaps one of the most extraordinary persons that Ireland has produced, where he was universally known, and also the

frequent subject of conversation. I shall therefore make no further apology for publishing his life.

In collecting the materials for it I carefully endeavoured to come at truth, which is acknowledged to be the first excellence of every historic composition. But lest the reader may not be satisfied of my care in this point I shall briefly mention my authorities.

Having been recommended to Mr. Skelton, by means of two sisters of his at Dromore, in the year 1780, when I was a scholar of Trinity College, Dublin, I was soon after admitted into his friendship and confidence, in which I continued until he died. During the three last years of my residence at that university, I passed at least three evenings with him in the week, and in my absence was favoured with his correspondence. In my numerous conversations with him I frequently inquired into the several incidents of his life, and usually preserved the information he afforded me. From his sisters above mentioned, and some others of his relations, and from the people in the parish where he was born, I learned more particulars both of him and his family. With the materials thus obtained I was not content, but, in the year 1788, went to the several parishes where he had lived either as curate or rector, and conversed with those

who were well acquainted with him during the different periods of his life, to acquire more anecdotes, and render my information as accurate as possible. I also, among other places too tedious to mention, extended my journey to the metropolis, and received there such intelligence as made sufficient amends for my trouble. In preparing the materials for the press I have probably taken more pains than it would be prudent to own, being resolved not to offer a work of this kind to the public without serious and mature deliberation.

Down, January 10, 1792.

THE LIFE

OF THE LATE

Rev. PHILIP SKELTON.

BIOGRAPHY conveys very useful instruction. It sets before us the lives of eminent men, that we may imitate their virtues, or avoid their vices. It is a tribute due to merit after death, and an inducement for others to strive to deserve this honour. It is even more congenial to our feelings than history itself; because few can be statesmen or generals, but every one bears a part in society. The historian introduces us into national assemblies, and presents to us scenes of public commotion. The biographer leads us into the sequestered walks of private life. The one is therefore more dignified and important; the other more pleasing and natural. We are usually curious to know every circumstance of the lives of those, who have been distinguished from the rest of men. Yet so depraved is our nature, that we read with more delight accounts of the destroyers than of the preservers of mankind

We are more pleased to attend the conqueror in his progress of ruin and devastation, than to observe the faithful pastor, carefully endeavouring to remove the doubts, rectify the errors, supply the wants, and soften the sorrows, of the flock committed to his charge. Of this latter sort was the great and good man, whose life I now offer to the public.

Philip Skelton was born in the parish of Derriaghy near Lisburn, in February 1706–7. His father, Richard Skelton, was a decent honest countryman, who held under Lord Conway a large farm at a cheap rent. The father of Richard was the first of the family that came over from England to reside in Ireland. He was an engineer of some repute in that country, and was sent over by King Charles I. to inspect the Irish fortifications. He enjoyed, however, but a short time the benefit of this employment, when the rebellion of forty one began ; and being then deprived of it was reduced to difficulties, which were at least not diminished by the accession of Cromwel's party to power ; for, as he might expect, they would not restore him to an office conferred on him by the King, the unhappy victim of their ambition. Necessity obliged him now to strive to get an honest livelihood by working with his hands, to which, we may suppose, he was not accustomed before. Such changes, however, in men's circumstances were not unusual at that time, when, by the victory of the saints, society

was inverted. He soon after married, and got a farm in the county of Armagh, where he resided during the rest of his life.

His son Richard in his younger days lived at Bottle-hill in the same county. He had served an apprenticeship to a gunsmith, and was employed at that trade when he went to Kilwarlin, and married there Arabella Cathcart, by whom he got the farm in Derriaghy already mentioned. Having removed, on his marriage, to that parish, he wrought diligently at his trade, until the whole country was put in confusion by the war between William and James. He was then carried off by King James, and compelled to work for his army. His wife, who had two children, and was with child of the third, having obtained a pass from the King, retired with her family to Island-Magee, a small peninsula near Carrickfergus ; where she was delivered of her third child, and experienced, during her illness, tender usage from the poor inhabitants, who sat up with her at nights to take care of her. "Whose turn is it (they used to say to one another) to sit up with the stranger to night." Nor was she ungrateful to them for their kindness. She entrusted her house and farm to a Roman Catholic family called Hamill, who, acting with singular honesty on the occasion, sent her, in abundance, butter, flour, and every other necessary of life, the produce of her farm, to her place of retirement. With a large share of what

she received she rewarded the people of Island-Magee for their services. On her return she found every thing belonging to her carefully preserved by the catholics, who took as much care of her property as if it had been their own. Such instances of fidelity were but rare in those turbulent times, when bigotry too often destroyed the force of moral obligations. Her children, on that account, had always a regard for those of the catholic persuasion. I heard Mr. Skelton often say, that the poor original Irish were naturally faithful, humane, and averse to blood.

His father, who preferred the cause of William, wrought afterwards voluntarily for his army. Let us not despise him for being the son of a gunsmith. Men of superior merit do not always spring up in the higher ranks of society. Demosthenes, it is well known, was the son of a blacksmith; yet this circumstance of his origin never detracted from his fame. The poet, his panegyrist, seems to dwell on it with pleasure.

Quem pater ardentis massæ fuligine lippus,
A carbone, et forcipibus, gladiosque parante
Incude, et luteo Vulcano ad rhetora misit.

His father blear-ey'd with the glowing bar,
That Vulcan forms to instruments of war,
Sent him from this to learn a nobler art,
With eloquence to charm the human heart.

In the latter part of his life he quitted the gun-

smith-trade, which could not be profitable in a country place, and kept a little tan-yard. So that Mr. Skelton used to call himself the *son of a tanner*. At his father's, he said, they always got beef on a Sunday, but not regularly during the rest of the week. The farm he had was indeed sufficient of itself to afford a competent support to himself and family ; yet it was necessary he should be frugal and industrious, for he had six sons and four daughters. Three of his sons were educated for clergymen of the established church, of which he was a member ; Philip who was the youngest, John who was schoolmaster of Dundalk, and Thomas who had the small living of Newry.

Philip, when he was about ten years old, was sent to Lisburn latin school, which was then kept by the Rev. Mr. Clarke, a man of eminence in his profession ; who, having afterwards left that place on account of a dispute with Lord Conway, obtained the school of Drogheda, where he lived to an advanced age. His spirited resistance thus helped to get him promotion in the world, which too frequently is the effect of tame submission to superiors. However, he did not leave Lisburn, until after Mr. Skelton had completed the course of his school studies. His father, though he lived within two miles of the town, placed him at lodgings there, that he might enjoy every opportunity of improvement. Sensible of its importance, he did not spare expence to give his children educa

tion. On Saturday evening he always went to his father's and returned to Lisburn on Monday morning.

At first he did not relish his grammar, which seemed dry and disagreeable, and therefore he would not confine himself to it. The master complained of this to his father, who used the following method to cure him of his idleness. He raised him one Monday morning early out of his bed, and having put a pair of coarse brogues on his feet, ordered him to go out immediately to the fields to work with the common labourers. This command he willingly obeyed, supposing it would be less laborious to toil there, than to fatigue his head with hard study. His father made him carry stones on a hand-barrow, and submit to the severest drudgery; not allowing him to come home to his breakfast, but keeping him fasting long beyond the usual time, and then sending it to him of the coarsest food to take in the open fields. When he returned from his day's work, he treated him as he did the lowest servant. He would not suffer him to keep company with the rest of his children, but bade him go to his companions the servants, and stay with them. Broken down at last by this hard usage he began to relent, and burst into tears. His father then said to him, "Sirrah, I'll make this proposal to you: Whether do you choose to toil and drudge all your life, as you have these few days past, living on coarse

food, clad in frize clothes, and with brogues on your feet, or to apply to your books, and eat, and drink, and be dressed like your brothers here?" pointing to his brothers, who, at vacation, had just then come down from the university, decked out in Dublin finery. Poor Philip, whose bones ached with the hand-barrow, said, "he would readily go to school, and be attentive to his studies." Accordingly he did so, and continued studious ever after.

The success of this project proved the sagacity of his father, who was remarkable for his good sense over the whole parish of Derriaghy. The gentlemen of fortune in that place had such an high opinion of him, that they used to invite him frequently to their houses, for the sake of his conversation. A Bishop Smyth in particular, who lived there, showed him every mark of attention, and his Lordship's daughters were pleased to make a companion of his eldest daughter, a young woman of sense and accomplishments superior to her opportunities. His father had also some knowledge of architecture, being employed to superintend the building of the present church of Derriaghy. His circumstances, by his care and industry, were daily improving, when death carried him off from his disconsolate family in the fiftieth year of his age; while he was engaged in building a dwelling house, and making a new tan-yard, neither of which were ever after completed. Such are the hopes of man!

A few hours before he died, he called to him his ten children to give them a charge. Philip, who had been then but half a year at the latin school, he desired to study physic, and learn to cure the disease that was killing his father. He obeyed, as I will shew, his dying command, but fixed on divinity for his profession, to which he believed himself called by a voice more than human. Thus did he lose in his tender years an excellent father, a man of admirable sense, a strict observer of religion, and a careful instructer of his children. He retained ever after a grateful remembrance of his worth. In his *Senilia* he calls him "his wise and good father." He used to say with Horace, that if he were appointed to choose a father out of all the men in the world, he would take the one he had.

While he lived at Enniskillen, he was once on a visit at Mr. Armour's of Castle-Coole, where he met with a Mr. Tench, Dr. Mc. Donald of the diocess of Clogher, and some others. The conversation turning upon the requisites to make a gentleman, on which they differed in opinion, Dr. Mc. Donald said, education made a gentleman. Skelton denied it. He said, that he only was a gentleman, as Lord Burleigh defines it, who has riches derived from ancestors, that possessed them for time immemorial. He then told them, there was not one of them a gentleman except Mr. Tench. "As for myself," he continued, "I am

no gentleman, my father was only a tanner; yet I would not change him for the best of your fathers, for he was a man of virtue and religion."

His mother was left with ten children. She had indeed the benefit of the family farm, but land at that time was comparatively of little value, and a great part of hers was rough and mountainous. Of consequence, her means of support for such a family were not over abundant; but she made amends for this by her care and prudence in managing her affairs. Her son Philip, who continued still to go to the latin school, lived, as it seemed convenient, partly at her house, and partly at lodgings in Lisburn. The sharp medecine which his father administered to him, having cured him effectually of his idleness, he was ever after, as I said before, extremely attentive to his studies. He that gains the prize of literature has passed through a previous course of discipline while a boy. Dedicit prius extimuitque magistrum. His parts, at first, were not remarkably quick or retentive, but his diligence enabled him to overcome every obstacle. When he was at a loss for candles to read at night, which frequently happened, he made use of furze, which he gathered for the purpose, and then throwing them piece by piece upon the fire, read by the glimmering light. Such was the expedient suggested by an ardent desire for learning. He used to tell us, that when he was at school, he and some of his schoolfellows,

who were also remarkably studious, often met together in the fields and examined each other most strictly for halfpence. He that missed the answer of the question proposed was forced to give a halfpenny to the boy who examined him ; which made them, as he remarked, prepare themselves with great care, for halfpence were then very scarce.

The following little incident of his life, while he was at the latin-school, cannot, I think, be unworthy the attention of the curious. Straying one day through the fields near Lisburn, he happened to shout out on the top of a hill there, and found that the echo repeated the same words successively in a still lower tone. He used afterwards to amuse himself often with speaking loud at this place. One morning he was repeating there the first line of Virgil,

Tityre tu patulæ recubans sub tegmine fagi,

when the usher of the school, a Scotchman, of a sour temper, very fat, and remarkable for chewing tobacco, walking near the place, and hearing the echo, imagined he was calling to him in a jeering tone of voice, *fat chops*, *tobacco box*. The Scotchman was so enraged at this supposed insult, that he insisted on Skelton's being turned out of school ; if not, he would leave it himself. Skelton told the master the story of the echo, and appealed to his schoolfellows for the truth of what he said. But

the usher would not be pacified, and at last, as a great favour, was content with his being whipped.

This odd sort of echo near Lisburn is mentioned in his Latin treatise on *sounds* by Dr. Hales late of Trinity College, one of the most worthy clergymen of Ireland, whose humility can be only equalled by his learning. For he had none of that stiff dignity, and supercilious importance, that too often distinguish academic authority. The whole account of the echo, conveyed in Mr. Skelton's own words, is inserted in a latin note at the end of the volume; but, on examination, I find it is of too philosophic a nature to be introduced into a work of this kind. I cannot now recollect any other incident of his life, while at school, worth relating. It appears indeed that he was not upon that occasion treated with over indulgence by the master, who, without any fault of his own, whipped him, just to please a peevish Scotch usher. To the sons of poor or middling men it would, I think, be a disadvantage to meet with too gentle usage from their preceptors. It is fit they should, from the beginning, be trained to difficulties, with which they may be forced to struggle all their days.

On leaving school, he entered a sizer * in the

* It is odd, that he never even insinuated to me, or, as far as I could learn, to any other of his acquaintances, that he entered the college in that capacity. Nor had I the least suspicion of it, until, on examining the college books, I found, that there were two Skeltons, both sizers, at that time in the

university of Dublin, as the college books inform us, in June 1724. His tutor was the famous Dr. Delany, who, by his conduct, proved himself, his real friend ever after. He applied there with diligence to the useful studies enjoined by that noble seminary, and soon acquired the reputation of a scholar. However, his attention to his books did not prevent him from displaying his skill in the manly exercises, in which he could find but few equal to him. He was allowed to be an excellent boxer, nor was he unwilling, if an opportunity offered, to show his cleverness in this accomplishment. He was also very dexterous in the small sword, and a complete master in the backsword. *He could come up to a St. George, throw an out and cut an in,** save himself, and strike his antagonist.

While he was in the college, he went once to Donybrook fair, and heard it proclaimed there, that a hat was set up as a prize for the best cudgel-player. The two cudgels with basket-hilts lying for public inspection, Skelton, like a second Dares, stept forward, took up one of them, made a bow to the girls, and challenged an antagonist to

college. All this might be construed into a sort of pride in him. Yet why should he be ashamed of being once in that academic station, which has produced some of the greatest and most conspicuous characters in Ireland?

* These are cant phrases used by teachers of fencing with the backsword.

oppose him. On this a confident young fellow came up and accepted the challenge. Immediately a ring was formed, and the two heroes began. They fought for a while on equal terms, warding off the blows by their skill in the science of defence. But at last his antagonist was off his guard, and Skelton taking the advantage, hit him some smart strokes about the head, and made him throw down the cudgel, and own he was conquered. He thus gained the victory, and won the hat. He then took the hat in his hand, showed it to the gaping crowd, made a bow to the girls, and told them, "he fought just to please them, but would not keep the hat, that they might have more amusement;" and then bowed again and retired. A hero in romance could not have been more complaisant to the fair sex.

The following trick of his, which has been since practised by some others, is not unsuitable to the character of a young man in the college. He and twelve more dining at an inn near Dublin, when the reckoning was to be paid, they discovered there was no money in the company. Skelton then invented the scheme of blindfolding the waiter, that the first he might catch should pay the reckoning, and thus they all escaped. However, he took care to have the landlord paid for his dinner.

He usually associated with his fellow students as often as he could find leisure from his studies,

for he was remarkably fond of society, an inclination which adhered to him constantly through life. The fellows of the college, observing a crowd of students about him whenever he appeared in public, used to say to him, "Skelton you have more acquaintances than any one in the college." In such a place, a similarity of age, dispositions, pursuits, often forms a society more agreeable than is experienced ever after. However, his fondness for society involved him then in a very unhappy affair. Ranging once through the town with a parcel of students, they raised a riot, and a man was unfortunately killed by some of the party. This had a serious effect on him, and made him cautious of the company he kept in future.

His temper, as may be inferred, was naturally warm and couragious, and unable to brook an affront: of this he gave a sufficient proof while at the university, according to our notions of honour at present. For he had a quarrel there with one of his fellow-students, which they thought fit to determine at Stephen's Green with small swords. But when they came to the ground, the seconds interposed, and the affair was thus settled.

This quarrel with his fellow-student made his college life very uneasy to him. The young gentleman was some way connected with Dr. Baldwin the Provost, who, by his means, was Skelton's enemy ever after. Baldwin was a man of a haughty temper; he carried every thing in

the college by absolute sway; he nominated fellows and scholars at pleasure. The statutes indeed give the Provost great authority; they were tinctured with a tyrannic complexion by the famous Archbishop Laud, a prelate of great learning and abilities, but unhappily a slave to ceremonies, and a promoter of arbitrary measures. The young man, who had still a spite against Skelton, pushed on by his malice to a false accusation, told the Provost he was a Jacobite, and thus, as he expected, roused his indignation against him. For Baldwin was one of the greatest whigs of his day. He was a Junior Fellow when James II. made a barrack of our elegant seminary. The king turning him out of his fellowship, as he did all others who refused to subscribe to popery, he was obliged to go over to England, and teach a common English school for his bread. King William, when he gained the victory, restored him. He was a furious enemy to Queen Ann's last ministry, and was active in forming schemes against them; suspecting they had a design of bringing in the Pretender; and who can say there was no ground for such suspicions? Indeed a dark cloud, which time has not yet wholly dispelled, seems to have been cast over this affair. His opposition to Queen Ann's last ministry caused him to be taken notice of by George I. who made him Provost in 1715.

Enraged at Skelton on account of the charge imputed to him, he sent orders for him to come

and appear before him. He instantly obeyed, little suspicious of the cause. The Provost then told him, he was assured on the best authority, that he was a Jacobite, and of consequence a most dangerous person in the university, where he might corrupt the youth by his bad principles. Skelton, astonished at the falsity of the charge, solemnly declared, that he was as strenuous for the House of Hanover as any one in Ireland. But the Provost, who placed more confidence in his favourite, said he would not believe him, for he heard it from one on whose veracity he could depend. Hence all his protestations of innocence were vain. The Provost then said to him, "Child, I'll ruin you for ever." "Will you damn my soul, Sir?" Skelton replied. "No," he said, "but I'll ruin you in the college here." "Oh Sir," he observed, "that's but a short for ever." By this it appears that even then he had a warm sense of religion, and did not fear the puny resentment of man. The rich and great imagine they have happiness or misery at their finger's end, and can deal them out at pleasure. Yet they are very stingy in bestowing one of them, supposing it best to keep it all to themselves, and probably they have much occasion for it. Their liberality with respect to the other, I shall not indeed question.

The dispute, that produced the malicious charge against his character, was owing chiefly to the conduct of his fellow-student, who imagined, his

intimacy with the Provost gave him a right to say and do what he pleased. He thought every thing became him. But Skelton could not bear his insolence; hence the quarrel ensued. The minion is often more intolerable than his master. The Provost did not delay the execution of his threats; he was scrupulous in keeping his word; he strove to hinder poor Skelton of a scholarship, but by a lucky mistake he was baffled in his pious efforts. He mistook him for another of the same name, and thus he received the reward of his merit, at Trinity 1726.

He piqued himself much on a *cut of his* (to use the college phrase) at his examination for scholarships. Dr. Delany, who examined in the Odes of Horace, met with these words, *carpe diem*; the lad he was examining called it *seize the opportunity*. This it seems did not please him, he therefore put it from one to another, till at last it came to Skelton, who said *crop the day*. "Right," the Doctor replied, "Why so?" "Because (said Skelton) the day is a flower," preserving the beauty of the metaphor. The examiner, many of whom have strange peculiarities, gave him it seems an additional mark for this answer. We often value ourselves more on hits of this sort than on matters of real importance.

He did not over-abound with money at that time, and especially before he got a scholarship, the emoluments of which are sufficiently known.

His two brothers the clergymen contributed in some degree to support the expence of his education ; but the assistance derived from these and his mother was not sufficient to keep him out of debt and danger. He was once in particular forced to confine himself some weeks within the college for fear of bailiffs, who were prowling about the gates in search of him ; for the lads would not allow these harpies to come within the walls ; yet if any were so imprudent, they met with very harsh usage, which served as an example to terrify others in future. The testimony of his friend Mr. Hawkshaw, to whom he was a long time curate in Monaghan, partly confirms the account I have given. For he assured me, that, for some years after he got the cure of that place, he paid Dr. Delany a certain sum every year to discharge a debt contracted while in the college.

The narrowness of his circumstances made him apply more diligently to his books. He had but few temptations to go abroad ; he wished to gain that distinction by literature, which he could not by fortune. The rich may slumber away their time, as they usually do, but the calls of nature often rouse the poor, and force them to their studies. Hunger is a most powerful spur to genius. Magister artis ingeniique largitor venter. It is this, he remarked, that chiefly helps the Scotch professors to make now such a figure in literature. Accustomed, he said, to encounter poverty in their

youth, and living in a barren country, and keen sharp air, like that of Attica, they easily overcome many literary difficulties, which appear invincible to those, who were bred up in sloth, softness and plenty. There are indeed some additional reasons, derived from the nature of their institution, which it would be inconsistent with my subject to dwell on at present.

Baldwin who was, if possible, still more enraged at him for tricking him out of a scholarship, if I may call it such, strove to vex him all in his power, for he was bitter in his aversions. In a short time he found it necessary to call him before him again but on a very different occasion.

Soon after he got a scholarship, on the death of Coghil the great civilian, there was a vacancy for a member of parliament to represent the university. Two candidates were proposed, one of them Dr. Helsham, the noted fellow, a tory, and the other Mr. Palliseer, a moderate man, whose father, the Archbishop of Cashel, had built Palliseer's building in the college, and made a present of a large collection of books for the library, which are to be seen there even now. Provost Baldwin, who required humble obedience in every thing, being averse to Helsham on account of his principles, sent for the scholars of the house, who with the fellows are the electors, and ordered them to vote for Mr. Palliseer. Skelton going among the number promised, as the rest did, to obey

his command. Helsham's party finding now he would be unable to succeed set up in his room Dr. Elwood, a senior fellow and a whig, who, on that account, and by making larger offers and promises, with which gentlemen abound at such seasons, brought over the Provost to his side. He then sent for the scholars again, and bade them not vote for Mr. Palliseer, but for Dr. Elwood. When he delivered his injunctions to Skelton*, he replied thus, "Sir you ordered me to support Mr. Palliseer, and in obedience to your command, I waited on him, and told him I would vote for him, how then can I, consistently with honour, retract my promise?" "Skelton," said the Provost, "you must do as I desire you, or mark the consequence." "Let it be as it may" he rejoined, "I will not break my word, but I will vote for Mr. Palliseer." "Sirrah," he replied in a passion, "you are an obstinate impudent fellow, and I never can get any good of you; but I'll make you repent of it yet." On the day of the election, Mr. Palliseer found himself deserted by the majority of his friends, who, through fear of the Provost, whose power it was dangerous to oppose, were forced to declare against him. Skelton previous to the elec-

* Dr. Palliseer of Rathfarnam told me, that Dr. Baldwin assured him he was not an enemy to Mr. Palliseer on that election. On the contrary, Mr. Skelton assured me that the Provost, on summoning him the second time, positively ordered him to vote for Dr. Elwood.

tion, had got a hurt on his leg, which lamed him, and made him use a staff; and on the day on which it was held came limping into the hall with a huge club in his hand, and a gown about his shoulders; a figure somewhat odd and terrific; for he was a large sized man, of a majestic appearance. When the Provost, who was returning officer, asked him, whom he would vote for? he replied, with an intrepid countenance, that he would vote for Mr. Palliseer, and said openly before them all, that it was very ungrateful in them to reject the son of a man, who had done so much for the college. Yet the father's liberality to it could not secure for the son the honour of being one of its representatives. The Provost's whim, inclining to the opposite side, was sufficient to turn the scale against him.

Skelton's conduct at the college election must appear, I should think, in a most favourable point of view. No threats of a tyrannic superior could prevail on him shamefully to break his word, and desert, at the hour of trial, the man to whom he had promised support. *He would not follow a multitude to do evil.* The whole tenor of his life was exactly suitable to the instance I have given, as he was always too strict an observer of virtue to yield to the fashionable current of the times.

It appears from Dr. Baldwin's influence at the election, that the university in those times was a mere borough of the Provost. If the candidate secured his favour, he was chosen; if not, he was

surely rejected. For the honour of modern times, we can boast, that the case is now quite altered, and that the freedom of election is fully restored to it. He that is acquainted with the nature of college politics for these some years past must be fully convinced of this. But the subject is too delicate for me to handle with safety. Yet Mr. Skelton's remarks to me, with respect to the college election, though they savoured somewhat of the courtier, may, I hope, be introduced, without giving offence. He said, that the college should always choose men of consequence, and high authority with government to represent them. "Such persons (he observed) would be able to obtain for them favours from government, which young hot-headed men of narrow connections could not possibly procure. The fellows of the college (he continued) have often complained to me that government never make bishops of any of them now, as they used in former times ; but how can they expect this, when they choose representatives to oppose them in parliament ?"

A part of the college, while he was there, being accidentally set on fire, he laboured hard in carrying water to quench it, which could not be effected till three buildings were consumed. He fatigued himself thus almost to death, while many of his fellow-students quietly looked on. His brother Thomas was once while a school-boy in imminent danger from an accident of this sort ; being confined by a

fever in a room in Lisburn when it was on fire; but he was luckily carried out to the fields before the flames reached the place where he lay.

Skelton, finding it impossible for him to gain the Provost's favour, resolved to take his degree as soon as the proper time arrived, and quit the college. He accordingly took due care to prepare himself for the examination, which it was necessary for him to undergo previous to his obtaining his degree, and answered as well as he could wish; but still there was an impediment in his way. The Provost strove to plague him once more before they parted. Being well assured he would be glad to get free of the college, where he was subject to his power, which he had made him too sensibly feel; on that account, at commencements*, by some idle pretence, he stopt him of his degree. He was thus all at once disappointed in his hopes. His only remedy now was to wait with patience till the next commencements, which would take place in about half a year. When the time began to approach, he considered how he might play a trick on the Provost and get his degree. Accordingly, a few days before it arrived, he waited on him, and after paying his humble submission, said to him, "Mr. Provost, I am extremely obliged to you for stopping me of my degree last time, because

* Commencements signify the ceremony of taking degrees, which is held twice in the year, viz. on Shrove-Tuesday, and the Tuesday next after the 8th. of July.

it was what I wished for above all things, and I beg and beseech you may also stop me now, as my friends are forcing me to take it and quit the college, contrary to my desire." "Ah, you dog," he replied, "what do you mean, do you wish to stay here contrary to your friends consent? Take your degree, Sirrah, and quit the college, or I'll make you smart for it." Skelton began then to cry and whine and sob, saying how greatly distressed he was at getting this unfavourable answer. "Don't be growling here, Sir," he said, "but go about your business, I'll not agree to your request, you shall take your degree in spite of you, Sirrah." Upon this poor Skelton with sorrowful countenance, though with joy at his heart, walked grumbling out of the room. "My scheme (he told me) happily succeeded, so I took my degree, and quit the college, and a fig for the provost." "He commenced Bachelor of arts in July 1728, and had his name taken off the college books on the 31st. of May following, two years before the natural expiration of his scholarship."

Though Dr. Baldwin treated him with such severity, yet he always spoke of him with respect, and indeed justly, for he was on the whole an excellent Provost. He possessed, Skelton said, a kind of solemn gravity suitable to his station. His person and external behaviour were dignified and striking. He required a strict adherence to academic discipline, and first set the example him-

self. He attended chapel twice every day, at ten in the morning, and four in the afternoon. He was also unmarried and a clergyman, an austerity enjoyned by the letter of the statutes. Yet he could not entirely overcome the propensities of human nature. His partiality for a certain fair one afforded subject of some scandal, and at length roused the indignation of the students, who rose up against her and turned her out of the college.

Baldwin, it is owned, had most of the qualities requisite for the station he possessed; but their effect was often destroyed by his tyrannical imperious conduct. His violent expulsion of Dr. Hughes, a senior fellow, for some disrespectful expressions against him in his absence, strongly marks the character of the man. In his political opinions he could bear no opposition. He had an utter aversion to Dean Swift, because he was a tory, and used to say jeeringly of him, that he was remarkable for nothing else, while in the college, except for making a good fire. He would not allow his college-woman, he said, to do it, but took that trouble on himself. He died, when he was above ninety, in 1758, having enjoyed the Provostship forty three years.

Skelton related the following story of old Baldwin's prowess. The students were formerly obliged by the statutes to go to Patrick's Cathedral every Sunday in lent, which produced shocking quarrels between them and the butchers of Patrick's market.

At one of these horrid conflicts, the Provost ran out before them, and said, "follow me, my lads, and I'll head you. I am appointed by your parents and friends to take care of you, and I'll fight for you till I die." "He would have done so too," said Skelton, "for he was as brave as a lion." It was at length found necessary, on account of these quarrels, to pass an act of parliament dispensing with their attendance at St. Patrick's.

I have been so much taken up with his academic scuffles with Dr. Baldwin, that I inadvertently omitted a few more of his juvenile exploits, which may, not improperly, be introduced here. Among his other accomplishments, he was also a most excellent dancer; he could both dance gracefully, and dance long, two rare qualities united. During the college long-vacations, he amused himself with various exercises at Derriaghy, such as throwing the stone, the sledge and the like. But long-bullets * was his favourite exercise, in which there was no match for him in the whole parish. Yet, though he excelled the generality of others in every exercise, he owned, he was beat shamefully by individuals in them all.

He went once in vacation on a visit to Mourne, and showed there at a public meeting many feats

* Long-bullets is an exercise, wherein a metal ball of two or three pound weight is thrown along a public road. He whose ball, in an equal number of throws, goes farthest past a fixed point, is victorious.

of activity; running up turf-stacks, like a cat, without stopping till he came to the top, which amazed every one present. When he saw them surprized at his agility, he challenged any of them to play long-bullets with him. They then produced, after some hesitation, a thin poor-looking body, who, they said, would play with him. Skelton viewed his puny antagonist with contempt. He looked down on him, as Goliah did on David. "Is it you," he said, "that's to play with me?" "Yes," the man replied. "Well, well," he said, "we'll soon settle this matter." Skelton then took the bullet, and made a huge throw quite confident of success. The little fellow then, in his turn, took the bullet, and threw it about twice as far as Skelton, who stood in amaze, as he imagined he could beat him easily. He declared he heard the bullet whizzing past him, as if it had been shot out of a cannon; he threw it with such force. Thus was he vanquished by the puny body he despised. People are not always to be judged of by appearance; hence too much confidence is often foiled.

The summer, in which he commenced Bachelor of arts, he spent, as usual, in the Parish of Derriaghy, where he met with a terrible accident, which he considered ever after as an instance of the divine judgment. He was then, as he informs us, twenty one years of age*, and since he was eight years

* Skelton's Works, vol. 5, page 522.

old, had never once omitted, morning and evening, to offer up his prayers to God, until one morning that two or three of his companions broke in on him while he was in bed, and carried him off with them to play long-bullets. While he was engaged in this sport, a three pound ball, thrown by one of his companions, hit a stone, and leaping back struck him above the left eye, and flattened the projecting part of his scull. He fell down seemingly quite dead, and was carried to the house of a Mrs. Granger, a woman that knew a little of surgery, who stitched the wound in five different places, and kept him for some time at her own house. A small splinter of a bone came out of his scull, before he quite recovered. This hurt, with extreme abstinence, and large evacuations, necessary to prevent a fever, greatly shattered, he says, his excellent constitution. He had always a grateful sense of the care taken of him by Mrs. Granger, and made her several presents during her life. He sent her (in 1774) a web of fine linen, part of which he desired her to keep for her winding-sheet. She lived until she was an hundred and five. The omission of his prayers on the morning it happened, he supposed ever after to be the cause of this unhappy accident. So early was his mind impressed with a lively sense of religious duty.

Having conducted Mr. Skelton, too tediously I fear, through the preparatory courses of school and college, I proceed to attend him in his pro-

gress after he entered into holy orders. When he got better of the hurt he received at long-bullets he lived for a while with his brother in Dundalk, and took on himself the management of the school, which by his presence rose to high repute. However he only staid there a short time, when he obtained a nomination to the curacy of Newtown-Butler in the county of Fermanagh, from Dr. Madden, usually called Premium-Madden, as by his means premiums were first established at quarterly examinations in Trinity College. He was recommended to the Doctor by Mr. Brook of Cole-Brook in the same county ; and was ordained a deacon for this cure by Dr. Sterne Bishop of Clogher, in whose diocess it lay, about the year 1729. He fasted and prayed two days previous to his ordination, doubtful whether he should get himself ordained or be married. His being ordained for this cure might then prevent his marriage, as he was bound to become private tutor to the Doctor's children, and reside in his family.

On the night after he was ordained, he and the rest of the young deacons slept in the Bishop's house, and one of them lay in the same bed with him. In the morning, another of them came to them while they were in bed with a rod in his hand, and began a lashing them in sport. At last, Skelton leaping up, took him by the neck, and threw him down stairs. The Bishop heard the noise, and

came running to see what had happened. Skelton told him, the young deacon was so flushed with being ordained that he could not behave quietly, but must lash him, and he was forced to shew him the shortest way down stairs. The Bishop owned, as he was insolent, he could not blame him. When he was ordained a priest, he and the rest of the candidates were examined by this same Bishop and his assistant a whole week in Latin, for they would not allow them, all the time of this curious trial, to speak a word of English.

The following story of a Bishop's examining a young man for orders I heard him often tell, and once in particular when Dr. Thomas Campbell was in company, who, I dare say, recollects it even now. He happened to come to the Bishop's house too late to be examined by the Archdeacon with the other candidates. However his Lordship said to the young man, "as I have a regard for you, I'll examine you myself." Accordingly he brought him up to his study, which was lined with books, and made him sit down at a table that was covered with huge folios and quartos. Immediately his Lordship sat down opposite to him, and thus, as Skelton said, hostilities commenced. His Lordship's first question was, "pray, Sir, how old is this world we live in?" The young man answered he could not tell. "A very sensible answer, (his Lordship gravely replied) for the septuagint says one thing, the Hebrew another, the Talmud

another, the Targum another; in fact no two of them are agreed among themselves about the age of the world, and therefore your answer is the most sensible imaginable." He then asked him again, "how old is the new world?" The young man said, naturally enough, he did not understand the question. "I mean (his Lordship said) how long is it since America was discovered?" The candidate then answered at a guess, it was so long, but happened to be fifty years either *in or over*. "Very well, very well, (replied his Lordship) you are within fifty years of it, which is no great distance, upon my word: This is enough." Thus the examination concluded; parturiunt montes. When his Lordship came down to the rest of the candidates, he said to them, "Gentlemen, I had some notion of making each of you write a little piece of composition, as is usual on such occasions; but I have thought better of it now, and in place of it, I'll only ask you to listen to a piece of advice I'll give you after dinner, relating to your behaviour as clergymen, which will be more useful to you, and more pleasing to me, than any nonsense you could write." His Lordship then, after dinner, according to his promise, gave them this advice. "You may think (he said) that good preaching will make you agreeable to your people; but here I must tell you, you are quite mistaken; it is not for this they'll like you; but I'll teach you a method of gaining all their favours. Look out for

some humorous jest book, and pick out all the droll stories you meet with in it, and get them by heart. Then, if you be able, make up some new ones of your own with all the circumstances of time and place, and the like ; indeed, if I had leisure, I could tell you a few of my own making, which might serve you on occasions. Take care also to recollect, if possible, every witty thing you hear in company, and fix it in your memory. Thus equipped, you will be well qualified to do the duties of your parish. For when you go to christenings, marriages, or wakes, you may easily entertain every one present by your witty jokes and droll stories, with which, you know, your head will be full ; so that your company will be sought for over the whole parish. With respect to your conduct in church (his Lordship continued) I have a word or two to say to you, if you happen to make a blunder in reading prayers or preaching, don't stop to rectify it ; but go boldly on ; for 'tis ten to one, if a single person in the whole church be listening to a word you say ; but if you stop, and go back on the word, and begin to hum and haw, the hearers will immediately prick up their ears, and whisper to one another, *Ah ! the curate's out*, *the curate's out*, and thus you'll be exposed to ridicule."

The living possessed by Dr. Madden is called Drummully, worth at that time about four hundred a year ; but the church, of which Mr. Skelton served the cure, is adjacent to the village of

Newtown-Butler. When the living of Drummully fell vacant, the Doctor was a colonel of militia, and was then in Dublin dressed in scarlet. The right of presenting to this benefice being divided between the Doctor's family, and some other: his family had presented on the last vacancy, and of course the other had a right to present now. His family, however, offered to give up all right of presentation in future, if they were allowed to present on that occasion; which was agreed to, and thus the Doctor got the living.

The Doctor, beside his living, had a very good estate; but as he was in a manner entirely devoted to books, or acts of charity and public good, he left the management of his income, both ecclesiastical and temporal to his wife, a lady well qualified for the business, as she was *happily* of a different turn of mind from him. Mrs. Madden was also in a high degree possessed with what we call family-pride. Her grand-father, it seems, had been lieutenant of the tower of London in the civil wars of Charles I, which made her assume a haughty superiority over most people that approached her. The place of their abode was called Manor-water-house, and is situate three miles from Newtown-Butler. Here Skelton lived as private tutor in his rector's family, having three or four boys to instruct in English, and the rudiments of the Latin and Greek languages. His situation here was not over pleasant, for he had great trouble with his

pupils, and especially with the mother's pet, who took great airs on him, and was very hard to rule. But Skelton would not be guided entirely by the mother's odd whims; he insisted on having the management of the boys to himself, and she on the contrary was very unwilling to grant it. He thus had frequent bickerings with her, as ladies in such cases often interfere from a mistaken affection for their children.

Being confined with his pupils the whole day until evening, he then went out among the neighbours, when he used to say, "thank God it is evening, I have got loose from jail."

While he was thus busily engaged with his tuition, he was obliged every week to write a sermon, which he was forced to compose in the school-room among his pupils, who were constantly plaguing him with their exercises, lessons, or brangles with each other. His situation here, it must be owned, was not very favourable for study. To complete all, he durst not, in making his sermons, borrow a word from any book but the bible. For his pupils, he said, watched him with hawk's eyes, so that if he had any other book but the bible before him they would immediately have given it out through the whole parish, that he copied and preached other men's sermons; which would surely have prejudiced against him the common country people, who would rather hear any nonsense of our own, than the best sermons

of the most famous writers. I remember a sensible man, a dissenting minister, who attempted to read a chapter or two of the bible every sunday to his people; but they began all to cry out against him, saying, *give us something of your ain, we can read the bible our sels at hame.* Mr. Skelton was obliged then to draw all his sermons out of his own head, which was too much disturbed by his pupils to be in a state fit for composition. It cannot therefore be expected that these sermons were very perfect in their kind; indeed he often declared, that in a year or two after they seemed so very nauseous to him, that it was as good as a vomit for him to read them. It is fortunate for a writer to see the defects of his own offspring, to which so many authors are blind.

At that time, he began to perform some of those wonderful acts of charity, for which he was so remarkable during the rest of his life. The salary derived both from the cure and tuition, considering the trouble he had, was but very small. Yet he gave at least the half of it away, hardly allowing himself clothes to put on. The following instance of his charity while there is well worthy of notice. Returning from church one sunday, he came to a place where a cabin with three children in it had been just consumed by fire. Two of the children were burned to death; the third shewed some signs of life, but was so horribly scorched, that the skin came off a great part of it. The poor people he

saw in want of linen to dress its sores, and, touched with compassion, stripped off his clothes, and tearing his shirt piece by piece gave it to them, as he found it necessary, till he scarce left a rag on his back.

Dr. Madden was, if possible, as charitable as he; his wife who knew his turn of mind, and was of a contrary disposition herself, took care to keep his pocket empty of money, for she ruled him with absolute sway. A poor woman came up to him one day asking for charity; he put his hand in his pocket and found he had no money. At a loss how to relieve her he gave her a pair of new gloves he happened to have, desiring her to go and pledge them for bread.

Mr. Skelton, when he lived here, published an anonimous pamphlet in Dublin, recommending Dr. Madden's scheme for establishing premiums in Trinity College. This production, being probably the first of his that appeared in print, was sent immediately to the Doctor, who was highly delighted with the compliments paid him by the author, which he justly deserved, on account of his endeavours to promote the interests of literature and of the poor. When he had slightly looked over it he brought it into the school-room to Skelton, with joy in his face, and said, he had just now received from Dublin one of the finest pamphlets that ever was written, and must immediately solicit the acquaintance and corre-

spondence of the author. Accordingly, he prepared a very complimentary letter addressed to the unknown author, requesting he would tell his name and honour him with his acquaintance. This letter, being approved of by Skelton, was sent to the printer of the pamphlet, who returned an answer in a few days from the author, expressing the high sense he entertained of the great honour intended him by the good Doctor, but that he was under the necessity, for some reasons he could not mention, of concealing his name at present. This answer was shown to Skelton, who was the Doctor's confidant on the occasion, and seemed in no wise concerned during the whole progress of the business. A second still more pressing letter was sent to Dublin, and an answer with a civil refusal, returned: As Skelton judged it for his advantage not to discover the secret. Thus the Rector and Curate, one from the study, and the other from the school-room, in the same house, continued for a while, by the medium of a Dublin printer, this odd sort of correspondence. All this time, he never suspected the person whom he complimented so highly, to be his own curate, and the private tutor of his children. If he had, possibly he might not have been so very respectful in his language, for people are not too apt to be over complaisant to those whom they look on as their dependants, however superior they be to them in learning and abilities, which in this country

are but little valued, unless dignified by the station or fortune of the possessors.

Dr. Madden, as I understood from Mr. Skelton, was a gentleman highly esteemed in those times. And justly too, if a life spent in the practice of every private and public virtue entitle a man to the esteem of those who reap the benefit of his services. To the exertions of this worthy man we owe the establishment of the Dublin Society, the advantages of which have been so often experienced. Mr. Skelton saw a letter of Swift's to him, he said, in which he set forth in his usual querulous strain, the miseries and calamities of this unhappy country, saying, that the Irish were the most lazy, roguish, worthless people on earth, and that he would do no more for them. The Doctor, as well as our great countryman, had a real regard for Ireland, and strove, as it appears, according to his abilities, to serve it. It being customary for him to go among the nobility and gentry soliciting subscriptions for useful purposes, he met with an odd reception in Dublin on an errand of this sort (as Mr. Skelton informed us) from a late nobleman, a famous member of the hell-fire club. His Lordship, on being told that the Doctor was in the parlour, shrewdly guessing at his business, immediately stript himself stark naked, and, in this state, came running into the room with out-stretched arms, saying, "worthy Dr. Madden, I am glad to see you, how do you do? shake hands with me

Doctor, when I heard you were here, I was in such a hurry to see you, that I would not wait to put on my clothes." The Doctor shocked at the wild spectacle, leapt up, and was for hastening out of the room; but his Lordship stopped him saying, "my dear Doctor, don't be in a hurry, tell me your business, I would be glad to do any thing to serve you." The Doctor pushed past him, but his Lordship accompanied him to the street door, where he stood for some time as a *show* to the people passing by.

He had the good fortune, when he lived at Dr. Madden's, to get acquainted with the Revd. William Leslie, Rector of the parish of Ahavea, a man of admirable sense, and complete knowledge of the world, for whose advice and friendship he was grateful ever after. His prudent and wise directions served to regulate the tenour of his youthful conduct. He called him his second father, and consulted him on every emergency. He declared he was the most sensible man he ever knew, and owned the many advantages he derived from his friendship. When he was Rector of Pettigo, this good clergyman on his death-bed recommended his grand-children to his protection, of whom he took a paternal care during his life.

At that time, his age and condition required a good advice. His situation at Dr. Madden's was not at all enviable. He was quite weary of his tuition. The lady of the house was proud and

parsimonious, and ruled her husband with supreme authority, who seldom interfered in domestic concerns. She wished also, it appears, to extend her dominion over Skelton, and prescribe to him how he should teach her children. This, it may be supposed, one of his spirit would not tamely submit to. Besides, she was highly offended with Skelton for exciting the Doctor, by his example, to acts of charity, to which indeed he was sufficiently inclined of himself. Of consequence, she strove to vex him, and make his situation as unpleasant as possible. In this state of pennance he continued for two long years, but was at last, for the sake of quiet, forced to resign the cure and tuition, and depend on providence for his support.

On leaving Dr. Madden's he repaired, as usual, to his brother's in Dundalk, where he staid but a few months, until he got a nomination (in 1732) to the cure of Monaghan in the diocess of Clogher, from the Hon. and Revd. Francis Hamilton the Rector. He took his diet and lodging in the town of Monaghan with a Francis Battersby, and in five years after with a George Johnston. In obtaining this cure he succeeded according to his wishes. His active and benevolent mind could not brook being confined to a school-room. He longed for leisure to pursue his favourite study of divinity, and to employ himself as a minister of a parish. His inclinations were all spiritual, and, he only desired an opportunity of being more extensively

useful; for long before he had fixed his thoughts on the rewards of a better world than the present.

Yet, at the very beginning, he was in danger of being turned out of his new cure. Dr. Sterne, the Bishop, whom Swift succeeded in the deanery of St. Patrick's, being rather an old man, of an odd temper, and a little credulous, was then imposed on by some one who told him, that Dr. Madden turned Skelton out of his family, for striving to entice his daughter to marry him. The Bishop, believing it to be so, refused to license him for the cure of Monaghan; on which he went to him to justify himself, hoping his Lordship was not offended at any conduct of his. "Ah, you're a sly dog (said the Bishop) you wanted to gain the affections of Dr. Madden's daughter, and get her to marry you; you are a handsome fine fellow, like your brother, who, you know, enticed a gentleman's daughter." Skelton requested his Lordship to apply to Dr. Madden himself, and inquire if he did so. The Bishop accordingly asked the Doctor, who said the whole was false, and that Mr. Skelton's conduct in his family was most honourable. He then gave him the license desired.

He related most candidly the whole of the affair respecting his brother alluded to by the Bishop. His brother Thomas, before he got the small living of Newry, happened to be tutor in the family of Mr. Lucas of Castle-Shane, a gentleman of fortune in the county of Monaghan. He was,

it seems, a handsome agreeable young man, and the Squire's daughter fell in love with him. When he obtained the parish of Newry, he used to go frequently and see the family; but perceiving the young lady's partiality for him resolved to stay away in future. After an absence of four or five months, at last, on receiving many invitations, he paid them a visit again. The young lady took then an opportunity of openly declaring her passion for him, telling him, he was the cruelest of men. Skelton, who had a real affection for the amiable girl, assured her, he would suffer any thing for her sake; the matter being thus settled, he carried her off and married her. His brother Philip, who knew all the circumstances, said he would have been a bad man if he had not. The Squire was highly enraged at his daughter's marrying a person, whom he looked on as an inferior, and would never see either him or her, or give her a penny of fortune. The husband therefore, as he had no other income, was obliged to maintain on his small parish a grand lady accustomed to high life, which pinched him not a little. However she continued but a short time with him; she died of her first child, and left behind her a daughter, that got her fortune amounting to 1300*l.* who is the present Mrs. Ennis, a lady eminent for her piety.

Thomas Skelton was afterwards married to Miss Huston, who, if now alive, would be aunt to the Lord Bishop of Down. By her he had a son who

died of a fever after he arrived at manhood. His third wife, for he had three, was widow Carleton mother to Sir Guy Carleton, now Lord Dorchester. Sir Guy's future eminence in the world was owing in a great degree, I am told, to the care which his step-father Thomas Skelton took of his education. Philip Skelton lived also on terms of intimacy with that great General, so distinguished for valour, conduct, and humanity. He has recommended young soldiers to him, and his recommendation always proved of advantage to those who obtained it.

His brother John of Dundalk married a Miss Turkil. Doctor Skelton of Drogheda is his son, a gentleman highly esteemed in his profession, who has now forty pounds a year profit rent from a part of the family farm. His father made a decent fortune by teaching. Mr. Skelton had also a brother called Robert, an excellent scholar, who married some person of low station, when he was on the point of going to the college. This put a stop to him in his literary progress. He was a man of a singular character, of strong natural parts, but too much addicted to drunkenness. His two other brothers, Richard and James, were decent country farmers. It is indeed surprising, that the father of these, who was but a plain honest countryman, should give such education to so many of his children. But this, among others, is a proof of his extraordinary good sense and prudence.

Mr. Skelton entered on the cure of Monaghan with that eager zeal for the salvation of souls, which a warm sense of duty only could inspire. He felt the weight of the obligation imposed on him. Well assured that he must be accountable hereafter for his discharge of the awful trust committed to his care, he resolved to act as became one, whose hopes and fears were placed beyond the grave. Having now got rid of a troublesome tuition, which before had obstructed him in his pious exertions, he gave up all his thoughts and time to the instruction of his people. Their spiritual and temporal welfare was, I may say, the sole object of his care. He laboured hard in his ministry; he visited them from house to house, without distinction of sect; he conversed with them freely, mingling entertainment with his instruction. The children he catechised every Sunday evening in the church, and when they became thoroughly acquainted with the original catechism, as in the prayerbook, made them learn the proof-catechism, which confirms and illustrates the doctrines of the other by texts of scripture. On a particular evening in the week, which he appointed, he invited people of every age to his lodgings, that he might instruct them in religion. And thus, by his means, they obtained a knowledge of their duty. I was told in Monaghan, that the children there knew more of religion at that time, than the grown up people in any of the neighbouring parishes.

In the pulpit he displayed that strong and manly eloquence, which arrests the attention of the hearers. He was neither a dull drowsy lecturer, who sets the congregation asleep, nor one of your smooth pretty preachers, that tickle the ear of the frivolous and vain. No, he despised such modes of instruction. He explained to his hearers in plain and powerful language the threats and promises of the gospel; he declared to them the indispensable conditions of salvation; he placed, like a faithful servant of the Lord, heaven and hell before their eyes, and left them to make a choice for themselves. His large gigantic size, his strong expressive action, his clear distinct delivery, his power of changing the tone of his voice, and features of his face, to suit his purpose, and above all, the sincerity of his heart, made an irresistible impression on his hearers. They were insensibly carried away with him, they were astonished, they were convinced.

His life was conformable to his preaching. It was a pattern of every virtue, it was decorated with piety, chastity, humility, and charity. For this last mentioned amiable quality he was eminent perhaps above all others in Ireland. Being born, as he supposed, for the use of the poor, he exerted all his endeavours to mitigate their sorrows. A great part of his annual pittance he gave them, and often scarce allowed himself even the necessaries of life. Some particulars of his remarkable charities

I shall relate in the sequel of this narrative. His life and preaching were attended with the success he desired. The manners of his people were in a short time greatly improved, and vice and ignorance retreated before so powerful an opponent.

His fixed salary for the cure was 40*l*, which, considering the cheapness of the necessaries of life in those times, was equal to double the sum now. The whole of this he got from his Rector, as the curates in assizes-towns had then, I am informed, no stipend allowed them for attending the jails. Yet with this he contrived to do wonders; for he avoided all unnecessary expence, accounting himself answerable to God for every penny he spent. He kept no horse, but performed in general the duties of his parish on foot. Now and then, however, when it was absolutely requisite, he obtained the loan of a horse from some of his parishioners, and especially from a widow in Monaghan who was often kind to him on these occasions. After paying for his diet and lodging, he gave, I am told, his mother out of his pittance ten pounds a year, to help to support her and the children, and used to visit her at Derriaghy every Christmas, and give her this sum in return for a pair of stockings she made him. Yet this donation could not be always regular, as he was obliged, for some time, to pay his tutor Dr. Delany a certain sum every year. He usually travelled all the way to Derriaghy on

foot, to save money for her, and the poor. His two brothers the clergymen were also liberal to their mother. He generally preached two Sundays at Lisburn church, when he paid these visits of filial duty, and always brought thither a crowded audience; for the people flocked from all quarters to hear him. His mother died in 1748.

About the time he got the cure of Monaghan, he made up twenty pounds for his part of his sister Frances' portion, who was married (in 1732) to one John Arbuthnot near Dromore, who dealt in linen cloth. His brother Thomas gave thirty pounds more. Her husband died about ten years after. She bore him six children, all of whom died before they arrived at years of maturity, except one daughter, who was married to James Mussen a farmer. I was well acquainted with his sister the widow, who some time after her husband's death came to live in Dromore. In her person and features she bore some resemblance to her brother, and was also agreeable, sensible, pious; admired for her conversation, and respected for her virtue. In the latter part of her days, she was afflicted with a disorder in her stomach, which she endured with christian patience, for, amidst her sufferings, she was cheerful, contented, resigned. This at length put an end to her life, in March 1783, in the seventy fourth year of her age. It was remarkable that until her death she could read the smallest print in a newspaper without spectacles.

A maiden sister, Mrs. Nanny, as we called her, who was older than Mr. Skelton, lived with her in Dromore. She had lost her sight many years before I was acquainted with her; yet, though she was quite blind, she wished to make us believe she could see. In company she has remarked to a lady beside her, "this is a pretty colour in your gown, it is finely shaded." She said to me once, "this is a pleasant sunshiny day, the volunteers looked very handsome to day, their arms glittered beautifully." Her vanity in this particular made her liable to mistakes; she has often, on my coming to see her, called me by a different name, yet, when undeceived, would never acknowledge her infirmity. She came once into a very small parlour, and pretending to look about her said, "this is a fine spacious room." Mr. Skelton, who was sensible of her weakness, spoke of her thus, "I have a poor old blind sister living in Dromore, who has the vanity to make us think she can see, God help her poor creature." She died in October, in the same year with her sister Frances, having lost the use of her limbs some time before. Her funeral was decent, at her brother's expence, who had contributed sufficiently to the support of his sisters, all of whom, and of his brothers, were now dead. Immediately on her decease I wrote to him in Dublin, and received from him a letter by return of the post, of which the following is an extract.

"*Dear Burdy,* *October* 16, 1783.

"He would be a cruel brother that could "wish his sister a longer continuance in such "misery, as my poor Nanny endured for the "greater part of her last year, at least. My "words cannot express the sense I feel of my dear "Hannah's * tenderness towards both my sisters, "particularly the last, that lay in such a miserable "plight so long on her hands. Half a year's rent "of the house I an still debtor for to her 2*l.* 10*s.* and "for funeral expences, as before for poor Fanny's "remains, 5*l.* 13*s.* 9*d.* making in all 8*l.* 3*s.* 9*d.* If "Mr. Agnew †, to whom my best wishes, will be "so good as to pay her that sum, or the 2*l.* 10*s.* "for rent, and draw on me in favour of any one in "Dublin, his draft shall be honoured the instant "I receive it. Probably he advanced the funeral "expences himself, if she did not take them out of "the 14 guineas I sent her by him. Hannah "is the best judge of the maid's attendance, and "trouble, and may either give her the 11*s.* odd "money included in the 14 guineas, or keep "them to herself. If she gives them to the maid "she shall be no loser by so doing. If I shall die "worth any thing, she will find herself entitled to

* Hannah Arbuthnot, niece by the husband to widow Arbuthnot, his other sister.

† A relation of mine, who acted like a son towards Mr. Skelton's two old sisters living in Dromore.

"a considerable proportion of it, and be punctually paid by my sole Executor Dr. Hastings." * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

Here he quits the subject of his sister's death, and mentions some particulars respecting myself, with expressions of resentment against certain persons, which it is more prudent to omit at present.

"However (he continues) the Dean is still our "man, on whom we may build some hopes. On "the good providence of God I still build higher. "My poor endeavours shall never be wanting as "long as the old head shall keep above ground. * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

"God bless my dear sister Hannah,

"I am most affectionately your's,

"PHIL. SKELTON."

He calls Hannah Arbuthnot his sister for her tenderness to his two old sisters in their sickness. Afterwards he thought it best to give her and James Mussen, who, as already mentioned, was married to his sister Frances' daughter, the sum, in his life-time, which he intended to leave them in his will. Having given this information concerning his sisters, which seemed naturally to succeed in the course of my narrative, I now return to his life.

The money which he gave his mother, or paid his tutor Dr. Delany, left him, we may suppose,

but thirty pounds of his salary ; with this he had to pay for his diet and lodging, and give charity to the poor ; a duty, as is well known, he was most scrupulous in observing. These generally got all from him except what barely afforded him the necessaries of life, of which he often pinched himself to supply their wants. Upon urgent occasions, when the pittance he could give was not sufficient to relieve their distress, he applied to people of fortune who usually contributed according to his desire. For who could refuse a character so exalted, that first gave all his own before he would ask any of theirs ?

He was particularly attentive to the state of the prisoners in the jail, whose situation renders them so helpless. To quit the gay scenes of the world, and plunge ourselves into such gloomy cells to comfort the afflicted, is surely one of the most humane of all offices. On examining the jail of Monaghan he found, that the poor prisoners were often cheated of their proper allowance of bread. But he took care soon to rectify this and every other abuse ; so that the condition of the prisoners there was in his time as comfortable as could be expected. To those who were condemned to die, he was a faithful instructer, affording such advice and consolation as was suitable to their melancholy state.

He was once very successful in his endeavours to save the life of a convict at Monaghan, of whose innocence he was well assured, that was condemned

to be hanged in five days. He set off immediately for Dublin, and travelling without delay, on his arrival there went to the Privy Council which was fortunately sitting. He was admitted, pleaded eloquently before them the cause of the poor man, obtained his pardon, and like a good angel, returned to Monaghan, with the happy news, before the day of the execution arrived.

While he was thus seeking for opportunities of doing good he met with one John Burns in that town, a boy who was born deaf and dumb. Touched with compassion at his unhappy state, he instructed him carefully in the christian religion, for which he was prepared, by having been taught to read and write a little while before. Some years after, John Burns published a book by subscription, at six shillings price, entitled a Chronological History of the world, by which he made a good deal of money. Mr. Skelton, it is supposed, helped him to write this book, that he might thus get relief when he was in great poverty, and procured him many subscribers. I dipt a little into it, and found it to be a registry of remarkable events, which might be consulted on occasions, but could not be read over without disgust. He keeps now a little shop in Monaghan. Having the curiosity, when I was there, to go and see him, I perceived he was a remarkably intelligent man. I was told that Mr. Skelton taught him to read and write, but his wife undeceived me, assuring me, that he only

instructed him in religion, after he was prepared to receive it.

His endeavours to convert one Craven in the same place, a notorious sinner whose wicked life gave offence to every sober christian, were attended with equal success. When he went to him and told him his business, warning him of the danger of his evil ways, the man was so desperately wicked, that he took a spit, and ran at him to stick him. Skelton was forced then to make his escape. However he had the courage to go back again, and at last, after much danger and difficulty, by long perseverance, by his awful lectures, and the divine aid, brought him to a sense of religion, and made him a good christian. He produced indeed a sensible reformation in the manners of his people, thirty or forty of whom usually attended prayers on a weekday; which, if one may judge by his own experience, seems almost incredible.

When he had acquired sufficient knowledge in divinity for instructing his people, he applied himself, as his father on his death-bed desired him, to the study of physic. For three years, he informs us *, he was employed at this useful science, and in this particular also was well qualified to serve his poor parishioners, whose lives were often sacrificed by ignorant quacks. Before he ventured to prescribe, he consulted a physician of eminence how he should conduct himself in so nice a point. The

* Skelton's works, Vol. 7, page 365.

physician then gave him this advice, "Sir, I advise you not to prescribe, unless you are sure you understand the disorder, and that the medicine will be of use. As for myself, physic is my trade, and when I go to see a patient, I am forced to prescribe something, should it be even brick-dust, to preserve my character, otherwise the people would imagine I had no skill; but as you are under no such necessity, you may do what is best." He took the physician's advice, and by this means was of great use to his parishioners, for he cured many, and killed none, which but few of our Doctors can boast of.

He used once an extraordinary application to effect a cure on a poor woman at Monaghan, who was somewhat wrong in the head. Being sent for to visit her in the capacity of a clergyman, he went walking with a long pole in his hand; and when he got to the cabin, was shewn into a sort of a room where she lay. "What ails you, my good woman?" he said to her. "Oh Sir!" she answered, "there is a little woman with a red cloak and a black bonnet that haunts me night and day, wherever I go, and gives me no peace. "Where is she now?" he said to her. "Oh Sir! there" (pointing with her hand) on the bed-post, "looking straight in my face." "Stand off all of you," he said to the people about him. Then he took the pole and whirling it round his head, hit the post a smart stroke with it, and made it crack again.

"Where is she now?" "Oh Sir! there, on that sod in the corner of the roof;" pointing to it. "Stand off," he said again, then whirling the pole as before, he hit the sod a harder blow with it, and knockt the greater part of it down on the floor. "Where is she now?" "Sir she is just on the cupboard there, looking at me." "Stand off all of you;" then he struck the cupboard with such force as to break the tea-cups on the shelves. "Where is she now?" "Oh Sir! she just flew out of the window." Thus he cured her of her delirium.

He was also sent for again to visit a man in the same parish affected with a similar disorder. When he came into the room where he was, which happily had an earthen floor, he saw him sitting on it with the coals of the fire all about him, in little heaps here and there, as if he were roasting potatoes. "What are you doing with the coals?" he said to him. "I am roasting devils," he answered. "You ought rather man," said Skelton, "to get some water and duck them, for fire is their own element." "I believe so," replied he. However, he humoured him so well, that he got him both to eat and sleep before he left him, which he had not enjoyed the benefit of for some time before.

Having wrought these cures on persons disordered in their brain, he tried his skill upon an hypocritical enthusiast at Monaghan, a weaver who, pretending a divine mission, set up to preach a new

religion, and drew some of his people after him, chiefly by wearing a white hat. While a parcel of them were about him one day, Mr. Skelton came up to them and said, "David, why do you wear the white hat?" "Because Philip," replied he, "I have no money to buy any other." "Well well, David," he said, "if I buy a new half-guinea black hat for you, will you wear it?" He returned no answer. "David, I say, will you wear it?" Still he continued silent. "My friends (Mr. Skelton said to the people) you see all his religion is in the white hat, he'll not part with it, take away that mark of distinction, and then there will be no more virtue in his religion." The people being convinced by what he said quitted their new teacher, who was forced to go home to his trade.

Though Mr. Skelton was usually employed in the serious business of his profession, he could now and then relax from such severity, and partake of innocent amusements and exercise. There were few, it appears, equal to him in the manly exercises; for in size, strength, and activity, he was superior to most men. He told me he has lifted up some huge weights, which no ordinary person could move. In the walks of the plantation at Monaghan, he threw the sledge and stone, played long-bullets on the public roads, and performed many other manly exercises. He could wind a fifty pound stone round his head without any difficulty, which shows the amazing strength of his arms. He

found it requisite indeed, even then, to make use of his hands to chastise the insolent.

One Sunday after church riding along with a lady to a gentleman's seat some distance from Monaghan, he came up to a parcel of tinkers on the road, whom he heard uttering horrid oaths, for which he rebuked one of them in particular in these words, "Sirrah it would be more fit you had been at divine service than be thus profaning the Lord's day." The fellow gave him a saucy answer and continued cursing as before. He then threatened to correct him if he would not desist, which made him more profane and abusive. Skelton could bear no longer, but leapt off his horse and struck him; the rest took his part, but he soon beat him and the whole troop of tinkers. He thus made them sensible of their crime by the only argument of which a tinker could feel the force. Then mounting his horse, he rode hastily off with the lady to the gentleman's house to which he was going, that he might be there before they should hear of it. But with all his speed it got there before him, and immediately on entering, they complimented him on his boxing and beating the tinkers.

He exerted his courage again on a similar occasion. A young officer, proud of his red coat, which he had just put on, came into the hall of an inn, while he, being then on a journey, happened to be in the parlour, and to shew his cleverness, fell a damning the waiter, and let fly a volley of

horrid oaths. The waiter then began a damning and cursing in his turn, and thus they were going on, when Skelton, coming out of the parlour, told the officer, that he was a clergyman, and that it was very offensive to him to hear such horrid swearing, and begged he would desist. The officer then said to him, "G. damn you for a scoundrel curate, what is it to you?" Skelton gravely replied, "young man this is not proper language to one of my profession, merely for giving you good advice." "Damn your profession, you puppy you, (for he thought Skelton was afraid) you deserve to be kicked for your impertinence;" and then uttered some blasphemous oaths. "Well Sir," said Skelton, "since fair means will avail nothing, I'll try what foul can do." Upon this he fell to him with his fists, and cuffed him through the hall of the inn, and soon cooled the captain's courage, and made him quiet and submissive. Thus he chastised the military man for his profaneness, exerting his valour in the service of God and religion.

It appears indeed he was fond of paying visits, and, among others, sometimes visited Dr. Maul, that worthy Prelate, who, when Bishop of Dromore, lived in the old see-house at Maheralin *. He once borrowed a horse from a Mr. Wrightsome of Monaghan to go thither. This horse being slipt in the back by the carelessness of some of his Lordship's servants, the Bishop gave him another

* A small village in the county of Down.

one in exchange which was not quite so good. But afterwards, as a recompence to the man, he bestowed on him his sermons.

Mr. Skelton set out in his ministry in the character of an avowed champion of the orthodox faith. Deriving his religious principles from the pure source of information, the holy scriptures themselves, he could find in these no real ground for the opinions of our modern refiners. Consequently he declared open war against all Arians, Socinians, and the like, considering it his duty to attack boldly these adversaries to truth ; and published several anonymous pieces against them. He found leisure, he said, amidst all the duties of his profession, "to switch the Arians now and then." These little productions, and others of his on different subjects, were published by a printer's widow in Dublin, who having a just sense of honour, would on no account discover his name. She had therefore the talent of secret-keeping from which some morosely exclude the sex.

Some of his productions were of a temporary nature, and of consequence were not republished by himself in his works, of these it cannot be expected I should take a regular notice.

In 1736, he published a pamphlet, the title of which is *A vindication of the Right Rev. the Lord Bishop of Winchester &c.* A book entitled *A Plain Account of the Nature and End of the Lord's Supper* was ascribed to his Lordship. In this he asserts, that

consecration of the elements is without scriptural precept or example, and that this sacrament is intended merely to commemorate our Lord's death. Here he insinuates, that no previous preparation, or resolution of amendment of life, is necessary for receiving the sacrament worthily.

Skelton, under a pretence of defending his character, exposes him. "It is very unjust," he says, "to suspect that a Right Rev. Prelate, who is more pious, judicious, orthodox and learned, than any that ever was, or ever will be, who has sworn and subscribed to all our articles, and has so tender a conscience, should be capable of writing so bad a book. It is a scandalous age, that ascribes such a work of darkness to such an apostolical messenger of light." Then he answers all the arguments produced by the Author in such a manner as to satisfy any reasonable reader.

This production was very pleasing, it seems, to Dr. Sterne the Bishop of Clogher. When he read it, he sent for him, and said to him, "Did you write this Mr. Skelton?" shewing him the little piece. Skelton gave him an evasive answer. "Well well," he said, "'tis a clever thing, you're a young man of no fortune, take these ten guineas, you may want them." "I took the money (he observed to me) and said nothing, for I was then a poor curate."

He published in the same year *Some Proposals for the Revival of Christianity.* The design of this

piece is to ridicule the infidels and enemies of our church. The great objection, as they think, which many have to the christian religion in this country is paying tithe to support the clergy, who do not deserve them. He therefore comes into their scheme. The church must be destroyed, the clergy turned out, hanged or banished, or if some choose to have any, they must live without food or clothes, the Bible is then to be burnt, and Magna Charta of course. Then a pure christianity, free from any low temporal motives, will take its place. This scheme might possibly suit the refined notions of the present day. His ridicule, however, is in general too clumsy to have any effect.

Some one of Swift's friends carried this pamphlet to the Dean in Dublin to find out if he wrote it, every anonymous production of any tolerable merit, on its first coming out, being then fathered on him. He was like a country squire famed for getting children, who has generally all the bastards in the parish laid to his charge. Yet he formed a determination to which he strictly adhered, not to acknowledge or disavow any anonymous performance, on his being asked if he wrote it, and therefore, when Skelton's piece was brought to him, only said, after reading it over, "the author of this has not continued the irony to the end."

In 1737, he published a *Dissertation on the Constitution and Effects of a Petty Jury*. Trial by a petty jury, according to the present mode, is, as he imagines,

a temptation to perjury, and the chief cause of the general corruption of manners which prevails in these kingdoms. He therefore advises, that a curious sort of ballot should be substituted in its place, which he thinks would produce most happy effects, and recommends it to parliament to have his scheme made a part of our constitution; the members who would be active in effecting this should, he says, be justly called the preservers of their country. This piece is written with sufficient sense and perspicuity; the inconvenience that attends forcing people by hunger and other uneasy sensations to be of one opinion is clearly pointed out. Yet I doubt if the chief corruptions, of which he complains, be owing to a petty jury; for we see other countries, where this mode of trial does not subsist, at least as faithless and wicked as our own.

Soon after this pamphlet was published in Dublin, the Attorney General, stopping his carriage at the printer's, inquired who the author of it was? The woman, as she was desired, refused to tell. "Well," he said, "give my compliments to the author, and inform him from me, that I do not think there is virtue enough in the people of this country ever to put his scheme into practice."

Mr. Skelton had, I understand, a ready turn at composition, having often composed, as he told me, a long sermon in twelve hours, which was no ordinary day's work. To write a sermon well is

possibly more difficult, than to compose equally well any other piece of prose of the same length. The biographer and historian have materials provided for them; their business then is only to arrange with skill, and express with perspicuity. The sermon-writer, beside this, must find out materials for himself. He must therefore exercise his invention, no easy employment, which the others need not. While he is thus employed, he must use also his judgment, in choosing or rejecting amidst the wild variety his imagination presents. He must examine into the different motives and actions of men, restrain their unruly appetites by showing the consequence of indulgence, set before them their real interests, apply to them by powerful arguments, and find out, if it be possible, the avenue to their hearts. He must fight against the passions and prejudices of the human race; he must strive also to make a man war with himself, and tear out from his breast every corrupt desire. A biographic or historic composition, though but indifferently executed, often engages the attention of the reader by the facts it contains; but in sermons, or works of morality, or disputation, which consist more of arguments than of facts, the readers' attention must be secured chiefly by the ability of the composer.

His fame as a preacher and a writer, his extraordinary care as an instructer of a parish, and his wonderful acts of charity and goodness, began,

about the year 1737, to be the subject of conversation, not only in the diocess of Clogher, and other parts of the North, but also in the metropolis. He had then some reason to expect a degree of attention from his Bishop suitable to his deserts. But here he was unhappily disappointed. He saw living after living given away ; but there was no notice taken of him. The Bishop of Clogher, Dr. Sterne, usually sent for him, after he had bestowed a good preferment upon another, and gave him, by way of a sop, ten guineas, which Mr. Skelton frequently made a present of to a Mr. Arbuthnot, a poor cast off curate, who was unable to serve through age and infirmity. He never asked, he said, his Lordship for any thing, but he thought his works should speak for him. "Men of real merit (he remarked) are always modest and backward, but blockheads tease bishops, and give them no peace, till they get something ; they therefore usually prefer them to get rid of them."

Non missura cutem, nisi plena cruoris hirudo.

About the year 1738, his first Rector the Hon. Francis Hamilton left Monaghan, on obtaining a benefice in the same county, and the living of Dunleer. A Mr. Douglas then got Monaghan by exchange, a man of a weak constitution, whose death, it was expected, would soon make a vacancy.

Dr. Sterne, the Bishop of Clogher, gave it appears but little encouragement to literature. Mr.

Skelton said, that he promised some clergyman in his diocess a living, upon condition of his writing a treatise to prove, that man could scarce know more of his duty than a brute without the assistance of revelation. The clergyman who, I believe, never wrote the piece, advised Skelton to do it as he had a ready pen; but Skelton, though his opinions inclined that way, having no offer of the same sort from the Bishop, thought it best not to volunteer himself in the cause. He had little or no expectations from his Lordship; the preferments were given away to persons whose qualifications were different from his. Of this neglect he could not be insensible; for a man of learning and abilities must surely be offended to see the dull and the illiterate placed over his head in a literary profession. He resolved therefore to quit his diocess, where his merit was overlooked, as soon as an opportunity offered. This happened in a short time.

Dr. Delany, who, as I mentioned before, was his tutor in the college, perceiving his unpleasant situation in the diocess of Clogher, procured for him an appointment to the cure of St. Werburgh's in Dublin. This was extremely agreeable to Mr. Skelton because he would then have a wide field to display his eloquence, which before was confined within too narrow a compass. His friend Dr. Delany could also more conveniently recommend him there, on account of his abilities, to the

notice of the great. These reasons struck Mr. Skelton very forcibly, and inclined him to go to St. Werburgh's. He had then, he said, a fair opportunity of speedy promotion, if he had embraced it, but unhappily he did not. Who can foresee every instance of human infidelity? When he was just on the point of quitting the diocess of Clogher, the Bishop perceiving it would be to his discredit, that a person of such abilities should leave his diocess for want of due encouragement, and influenced also by another motive, which I shall mention afterwards, sent a favourite clergyman to him with a message to this purpose, "that if he staid in his diocess, he would give him the first living that should fall." Skelton depending on his Lordship's word (for what could be more sacred than the promise of a bishop?) informed his friend Dr. Delany, that he would not take the cure of Werburgh's, but that he would continue in the diocess of Clogher, on the Bishop's promise of the first living vacant. Accordingly, the cure of Werburgh's was otherwise disposed of. Skelton's only dependance now was upon the Bishop of Clogher, who was bound by every tie of honour to provide for him. But his notions of honour were not over nice. I am sorry that my regard to truth obliges me to own his Lordship broke his word. The first living that fell was that of Monaghan (in 1740) where Mr. Skelton was Curate, and his Lordship, disregarding his promise, gave it to his

nephew Mr. Hawkshaw, a young gentleman who had lately entered into orders.

When he bestowed the preferment on his nephew, he said to him, "I give you now a living worth three hundred a year, and have kept the best Curate in the diocess for you, who was going to leave it; be sure take his advice, and follow his directions, for he is a man of worth and sense." Hence it appears, that his Lordship made his promise with a fixed determination to break it. He expected from Mr. Douglas's state of health that the living of Monaghan would soon be vacant, and he was resolved in his mind to give it to his nephew, but he wished to have Skelton to assist him, and feared, lest his leaving the diocess in a huff might bring censure on himself; he therefore fixed on the scheme of sending the divine with a promise in his mouth, which he never intended to perform. Every circumstance relative to this affair I mention upon the authority of Mr. Skelton himself, from whom I have heard it above twenty times. Mr. Hawkshaw, who is still alive, is a gentleman of too much honour to deny it. Yet it is but justice to own, that no blame can be laid to him. Possibly he did not know of the Bishop's engagement with Mr. Skelton; or if he did, where is the man that in such a case would refuse a good living when it is offered to him? By his conduct afterwards to Mr. Skelton it appears, that he thought him injured, or at least well worthy of

a higher station in the church, for he treated him with singular respect and esteem.

Mr. Skelton did not bear his Lordship's breach of promise with remarkable temper. He expressed his resentment with great plainness, "God forgive me," he used to say, "I railed against him most violently, but he did not regard it; his station placed him far above me, and what did he care for the censure of a poor curate?" He never attended a visitation during the remainder of his Lordship's life, which continued for a series of years. The Bishop never asked for him, nor seemed surprised at his absence, for his own breast told him the cause of it. After his promise to him, he disposed of many livings without offering him one of them. "I saw then," said Skelton, "sorry fellows, time after time put over my head, but I could not mend myself, though it vexed me more than it ought." It appears that the sense of his injury had some effect on his patience. He was then a young man; his temper was warm, his notion of honour just and pure; he expected that the conduct of so dignified a personage as a Bishop should be regulated by the same principles as his own. His disappointment in this particular, especially as it touched him so closely, made him express his resentment against the person that deceived him. All this was the natural and necessary effect of the injury he sustained.

The respect, which Mr. Hawkshaw entertained

for Mr. Skelton his curate, was shown on his first obtaining the living. He said to him, "Sir, I am but a very young man, and you are fit to direct me, give me your advice and I'll do whatever you desire me." This showed him to be a young man of a noble and ingenious disposition, which he displayed in the whole of his subsequent conduct towards Mr. Skelton. Under such a rector, he must have been as happy as the condition of a curate situated as he was could admit.

Mr. Hawkshaw, who was himself scrupulously attentive to his duty, told me, Mr. Skelton gave him the clearest ideas of the duty of a clergyman that could possibly be conceived. He was often forced, he said, to steal to attend the sick, as Mr. Skelton would be angry at him if he would not let him go himself. A noble emulation between a rector and a curate.

Though Mr. Skelton strove to act so consistently with the character of a clergyman, yet he could not escape the censure of the sour fanatic. One John Porter, a presbyterian church-warden, coming in on him on a Sunday morning, when he happened to be shaving himself, seemed surprised, and told him it was a shame for one of his coat to shew such a bad example. "Well John," said he, "if you think it is your duty, present me." "I believe I will," he replied. At the visitation, he asked the Bishop, if a clergyman could be presented for shaving himself on a Sunday? The

Bishop said he thought not ; this made John stop his proceedings.

However, he was actually presented to the Bishop for abusing a Mr. Wrightsome at a vestry, where parishioners usually display their eloquence. A vestry being held at Monaghan a short time before to bring an overseer to an account, who had the management of some repairs in the church, Wrightsome (who formerly lent him the horse) openly insulted him there before all the people. Skelton then told him, shaking his fist at him out of the reading-desk, that if he had him out of that place he would chastise him for his insolence. This gave rise to the charge laid against him, which set forth, "that he was a wrangling, bullying clergyman, and a dangerous man to deal with, as he would readily strike any one who seemed offensive to him." The Bishop disregarded their accusation, which was drawn up by one Little, who was rebuked by Mr. Skelton and Mr. Hawkshaw for getting bastards. The common report is, that he leapt out of the reading-desk, and cuffed Wrightsome in the aisle. But a person of veracity who was present assured me, that he only threatened him in the manner I have mentioned.

At another vestry he was almost involved in a serious quarrel with a Major of the army. The Major having affronted him there, as he thought, when he came out of the church, he threw off his gown, and challenged him to fight him, "but the

Major (he remarked to us in conversation) though he was one of the bravest men on earth, treated me with contempt; for he scorned to fight a clergyman." He thus candidly allowed him his merit. He always spoke with horror of his conduct on that occasion, and begged God's pardon, pleading as an excuse the violence of passion, which hastily hurried him on to give the challenge. For in his serious and sober days he had an utter aversion to duelling, which he considered as sacrificing one's soul at the shrine of false honour.

He related a curious remark of Swift's upon an affair of honour of this nature. A friend came one morning to see the Dean in Dublin. The Dean bade him sit down. "No," he replied, "I cannot stay, I must go immediately to the park to prevent two gentlemen from fighting a duel." "Sit down, sit down," said the Dean, "you must not stir, let them fight it out, it would be better for the world that all such fellows should kill one another."

The strict attention that Mr. Skelton paid to the duties of his profession prevented his being engaged in the softer concerns of human life. I question if he ever was really in love, though it is allowed he had a variety of sweethearts. He seems indeed to have been proof against the fascinating charms of the fair, whose gentle weapons have conquered the greatest heroes and philosophers, and made them submit to their yoke. Monaghan was the scene of his loves, and possibly

a short account of these may not be unentertaining to my readers.

He was once courting a young lady, and when they were just on the point of being married, she said to him one day, "my dear, as you are but a poor curate, how will you provide for our children?" "Why my love," he answered, "suppose we have three sons, I'll make one of them a weaver, another a taylor, and the third a shoemaker, very honest trades my jewel, and thus they may earn their bread by their industry." "Oh!" she replied, "never will I bring forth children for such mean occupations." "Well then," said he, "I have no other expectations, and of consequence you and I will not be joined together, for between your pride and his poverty poor Phil. Skelton will never be racked." Thus the match was broke off. Soon after this one S** S** a fine fellow with a gold-laced waistcoat paid his addresses to the young lady, who was so much captivated with his appearance, and especially with the waistcoat, that she instantly married him without once inquiring how he would provide for her children. However, they lived very unhappily; he starved her, and she cuckhold him, and turned out a whore and a drunkard. Skelton often thanked God he did not get her, observing that he had a fortunate escape, for she would surely have broke his heart. If she had married him, he said, she would have got rough plenty, but she preferred the man with the gold-

laced waistcoat, and was thus deceived by outward show.

He paid his addresses once, he told me, to a young lady, who, in her conversation with him, began to talk boastingly of her great family, saying what grand relations she had, and the like. "Upon this (he remarked to me) I found she would not answer for a wife to me; because she would despise me on account of my family, as my father was only a plain countryman, and therefore I thought it best to discontinue my addresses for the future."

Again, he was courting another young lady, and was just going to be married to her; when he happened to find a gay airy young fellow in a private room with her, and then in his rage took the beau with one of his hands and held him up before her, as you would a puppet, and carrying him to the stairs, let him drop down. When he had thus punished my gentleman, he broke off from the lady in a passion, and would never visit her again in the character of a lover. His brother Thomas strove to dissuade him from this odd resolution, telling him he ought to think the more of the young lady for having many admirers. But his advice did not avail, for he was rather obstinate on the occasion, observing, that if she were fond of him, she would have no familiar intercourse with another.

He seemed indeed once to have had an ardent

passion for a Miss Richardson, for in his eagerness to see her, he rode cross the lake of Coothill in the great frost, without perceiving he was riding on ice. However, we may suppose his fondness soon began to cool. His being a curate, I should think, made him cautious of plunging too deep into love. He knew that marriage must have confined him still more in his charities, which were always nearest to his heart; unless he could get a good fortune by it, a boon seldom conferred on one of his station. He therefore strove to keep down his passions by abstinence, and lived for two years at Monaghan entirely on vegetables. I was told indeed that he would once have been married to a young lady, had he not been disappointed of a living that was promised to him. He had however pure and refined notions of love; nor did he, like some others, affect to ridicule that gentle passion. He thought it cruel of a parent obstinately to thwart the affections of a child; unless there was a glaring impropriety in the choice. "Poor things (he used to say of two lovers) since they love one another, they should let them come together, it is a pity to keep them asunder."

In 1741, he published the *Necessity of Tillage and Granaries in a Letter to a Member of Parliament.* The art of cultivating the ground, next to the care of our souls, is certainly the most useful to man. Consequently, any piece of writing, which has agriculture for its object, is worthy of attention.

The estate of the member of parliament, to whom this letter is addressed, lay in the South of Ireland, which, though of a soil admirably fit for tillage, by a pernicious sort of management, was applied almost entirely to grazing ; and its condition is yet too much in need of improvement. In this letter he shows by the strongest arguments the excellence of agriculture over pasturage, advising the gentleman of fortune, from motives of private interest, to encourage the one in preference to the other. As a consequence of the neglect of tillage, and the want of public granaries, he takes notice of a horrible famine that prevailed in this country for the two years before he published his letter. "It was computed, that as many people died of want, or of disorders occasioned by it, during that time, as fell by the sword in the massacre and rebellion of forty one. Whole parishes in some places were almost desolate; the dead were eaten in the fields by dogs for want of people to bury them." A shocking picture of national calamity. This letter proves his knowledge in agriculture, and contains many excellent precepts, which, if put in practice, would help to civilize the South of Ireland, that is sunk in idleness and sloth, and ready on every occasion to burst forth into acts of violence and disorder. Its style is remarkably perspicuous, though somewhat tinctured with vulgarity, which might possibly be owing to the nature of the subject it treats of. It has, however, been remarked by some judges of

agriculture, that many of his calculations in favour of the farmer will not hold good in practice.

In the same year he published, in the transactions of the Royal Society, a piece entitled a *Curious Production of Nature*. It gives an account of a great number of caterpillars, that crawled (in 1737) on some trees in the county of Monaghan, leaving behind them a fine silken web on the bark of the trees. Some of these continued for two years, but were mostly all destroyed by the frost in the terrible winter of forty. Many distempers, he imagined, are owing to invisible insects.

About this time he was nearly brought into a scrape by an anonymous publication. His brother Thomas having a quarrel with one Steers, who first carried on the Newry canal, prevailed on him to write a pamphlet against him, which was very severe, and vexed Steers so much that he threatened a prosecution. The printer told him he must for his own sake declare his name; on which Mr. Hawkshaw advised him to conceal himself, until the storm would blow over, an advice which he found it prudent to take. However, the man's passion cooling after a while, he ventured then to come out from his retreat.

Having now given up all hopes of preferment from the Bishop of Clogher, he accepted (in 1742) of the tuition of the present Earl of Charlemont. Mr. Hawkshaw advised him to make a trial of it, as it might tend to advance him in the world,

offering in the mean time to keep the cure open for him. His tuition seemed at first so agreeable to him, that he wrote to Mr. Hawkshaw to dispose of the cure of Monaghan, for he would stay where he was on account of the civility he met with. Accordingly, Mr. Hawkshaw began to look out for a curate, and had nearly fixed upon one, when he received a letter from Skelton, informing him, he would quit the tuition and resume his cure. This sudden change of sentiment in him it is necessary to account for.

Mr. Adderley, who had married Lady Charlemont, and was guardian to the minor, on her death, would lose his place if he could not procure sufficient security. He applied to Skelton, who, by his acquaintance with one Law, Cashier to the Bank of Fede and Wilcocks, got that Bank to promise to give security. At this time, the Bank of Mr. Dawson offering the same, Mr. Adderley gave it the preference. Skelton was angry at him for putting him to so much trouble, and then making a fool of him. This was the beginning of their quarrel. He also it seems gave Lord Charlemont some advice that was disagreeable to Mr. Adderley*.

This little dispute with the guardian producing some ill humour between them, Skelton deter-

* This intelligence relating to Mr. A. I received at Monaghan from a person, to whom Mr. Hawkshaw recommended me to apply for authentic information.

mined to resign the tuition, and took the following method to give him warning of his intention. Mr. Skelton, and he, and some more company sitting one day after dinner over a glass of wine, Mr. Adderley said to Skelton, who was tedious in drinking his glass, "you are hunted Mr. Skelton;" "Yes Sir," said he, "I have been hunted by you this some time past, but you shall hunt me no more." Accordingly he gave up the care of his Lordship's education, and returned to his cure.

It appears, that even then Mr. Skelton had a very high opinion of Lord Charlemont. Soon after he left him he published (in 1743) *Truth in a Mask*, with a dedication to this Nobleman. At the beginning of it he says, "it was for many and weighty reasons, which in charity he forbears to mention, that he chose to quit him so soon." Though he owns no blame can be laid to his Lordship. It is easy indeed to observe by the dedication, that he looked on Lord Charlemont in his juvenile years to be far superior to the generality of our young Irish Lords; nor has the maturer age of this venerable nobleman disappointed the expectations formed of him in his youth. The advantages derived to this kingdom from his exertions, and from those of the illustrious armed patriots, who chose him their commander, men who sacrificed private ease and profit to the public good, are too well known to be dwelt upon here.

His reason for writing Truth in a Mask, which

consists of thirteen Allusions, is thus expressed in the dedication; "I have found by experience, that the naked truth is displeasing to most people, and even shocking to many. I have therefore in the following Allusions given religious truth such a dress and mask as may perhaps procure it admittance to a conference with some of its opposers and contemners." He mentions also the example of our blessed Saviour, who gained an admission to the human heart by his parables. His allusions however, he says, "cannot be understood without a competent knowledge of Church History, and a near acquaintance with the present reigning controversies in religion; so that, as they are calculated for the perusal of the learned and judicious alone, it is not to be hoped they will please many." Yet I doubt if they ever proved as agreeable even to the *learned and judicious reader*, as the Author expected. Their meaning is often too dark; the things to which they allude are not shown with sufficient clearness. In compositions of this sort, which proceed wholly out of an author's own brain, it requires great art to make them palatable. Their intent is to expose the absurdities of Popery, and false principles of Arianism. Yet the dedication prefixed, which contains some admirable advice in very forcible language, is more worthy of being preserved than any of the Allusions.

On leaving the tuition of Lord Charlemont, he returned, as already mentioned, to his cure, which

was kept open for him by his indulgent rector Mr. Hawkshaw, and applied busily as before to reading and composition. While he was a curate, and engaged thus at close study, he was offered a School worth five hundred pounds a year arising from the benefit of the scholars. But he refused it, as his accepting of this office must have put a stop to him in his progress to literary improvement. He had marked out for himself several useful compositions which he intended to publish, few or none of which could ever have been completed, had he embarked in the tumult of a public School. The noise and hurry of such a place are, it is well known, adverse to study, which requires silence, quiet and calmness. How could we settle ourselves to composition, if a parcel of clamorous boys were bawling about our ears?

I nunc et tecum versus meditare canoros.

It was remarked to him by some of his friends, that he might sit in a private room at his studies, and leave to his ushers the chief trouble of the school, which he might visit occasionally, as it would suit his convenience. But he said, he could not in conscience take the money, without giving up his whole time and attention to his scholars; which would prevent him for executing the plan he had formed.

About this time he was walking on the road near Monaghan, when a fine dressed servant came

riding up to him, and asked him if he knew a Mr. Skelton? He said he had a right to know him a little for he was the man himself. The servant then gave him a letter he had for him signed * * * * a lady of good fortune, who told him that her dear husband was just dead, and as she had more dependance on him than on any other man alive, she begged he would come to her family to teach her children for which she would allow him an ample salary, and also sufficient leisure to pursue his studies. The offer appearing advantageous required some consideration. He therefore informed the lady by the servant, he would give her a positive answer in a day or two. The rest of the day he passed in anxious thought; at night he lay sleepless in bed, without forming a fixed resolution; towards morning he fell into a doze, and saw clearly, he said, a vision which determined his choice *. He saw, he assured us, the appearance of a wig-block rising by degrees out of the floor of his room, which continued thus to rise till it got above the floor, and then moving back and forward, said in a solemn voice, "Beware of what you are about," and sunk gradually down. He was thus warned by the awful vision. Instantly he went to the lady, and told her he could not leave his cure. She expressed her sorrow at his determination, but requested he

* This is somewhat on the marvellous, but I give it as I got it.

would look out for some one, who, he thought, would suit her purpose. He promised to do so, and in a short time brought her a gentleman every way qualified. When she saw him, she took Mr. Skelton aside, and told him, she had no objection to the gentleman but one; and that was, he was too handsome, which would probably cause ill natured people to throw reflections on her character, as she was a young widow. She therefore requested he would get her some other one more ordinary. Accordingly he procured her one who answered her description. But, as Skelton remarked, "she married him in two years, in half a year after she cuckhold him, and then I saw her with my eyes a beastly drunkard." Thus the wig-block warned him of his danger.

In 1744, he published the *Candid Reader, addressed to his terraquous Majesty, the World.* This production is among the best of his short occasional pieces. In his attempts at wit he is tolerably successful. The objects of his ridicule are Hill the Mathematician, who proposes making verses by an arithmetical table, Lord Shaftsbury, and Mr. Johnson, the Author of a play called Hurlothrumbo. The parallel he draws between the Rhapsody of Lord Shaftsbury and the Hurlothrumbo of Johnson appears somewhat pleasant and judicious.

In the same year, he also published *a letter to the Authors of divine Analogy and the minute Philosopher; from an old officer.* This is a plain sensible letter.

The veteran, in a military style, advises the two polemics to turn their arms from one another against the common enemies of the christian faith.

The year 1745 was remarkable, it is well known, for an attempt made on the religion and liberty of these kingdoms. At this season of general commotion, Mr. Skelton published his short piece entitled *Chevalier's Hopes*. It is a bold animated production fraught with excellent advice; but appears by its style to have been written in a hurry, to suit the circumstance of the time, which was too confused to afford leisure for a polished composition. It shows, that the Pretender had no real hope of success but one—the horrible wickedness of these kingdoms, which might justly bring down on them the divine vengeance.

The people, he said, in many parts of the North were possessed then with a terrible dread of the Highlanders, whom they expected every day to come over on them. At that time, he told us, a doughty captain of militia and his men were parading and exercising on a rainy day to prepare for combat, and when they had finished their manœuvres, went to a public house to regale themselves, and dry their clothes, and were sitting at the fire burning their shins, and boasting of what feats they would do, when the woman of the house, who happened to be out, opening the back-door, shouted to her husband, "Johnny, Johnny, here are the Highlanders at the back-door." On this

the captain and his men all started up, and ran out of the other door in dread of their lives, leaving their arms behind them. They ran near a mile cross the country, without looking back, until at last, hearing no shots, nor any one pursuing, they ventured to look back, and found all was quiet. Their fears it seems put a wrong interpretation on the good woman's words. Her Husband had lately got from the Highlanders two Scotch ponies, which to distinguish them they called Highlanders. These having a few days before strayed to the adjacent mountains, could not be found until the rain brought them home; and the woman rejoiced to see them shouted to her husband, "Johnny here are the Highlanders at the back door;" which the militia men supposing to be the real Highlanders *took to their scrapers* to save themselves, and thus were frightened away by two Scotch ponies.

Bishop Sterne having about this time finished his earthly career, the See of Clogher was conferred on Dr. Clayton, the notorious Author of the *Essay on Spirit.* His Lordship being a professed Arian in principle, it could not be expected that there would be a close coincidence of opinion between him and Mr. Skelton. Whenever they happened to come into contact, they were generally *in each other's hairs*, to use a boxing phrase. The Bishop, as it may be supposed, always gave the first blow, and Skelton stood resolutely on the defensive.

The polemic weapons were handled on both sides with sufficient skill; probably to the amusement of the standards by. But the Bishop in dignity of character and station had the advantage over poor Skelton, whose only dependance was upon the strength of his arguments. He told me, the Bishop once made a speech to him a whole hour long against the Trinity, to which he was forced to listen with respectful attention. "I was then on the watch," he observed, "to see if I could catch hold of any thing the Bishop said, for I knew I would not be allowed to speak five minutes in my turn, as I was but a poor Curate." Accordingly, he perceived some flaw in the Bishop's arguments, and when he had finished his oration, asked his Lordship how he reconciled that with the rest of what he said, for he appeared to contradict himself? His Lordship, who never suspected the weakness of his own reasoning, seemed startled at Skelton's objection; but when he pressed him, according to the Socratic mode, with the absurdity of his own arguments, his Lordship was left in a hobble, and had nothing to say. Mr. Skelton told me all the particulars of this dispute with the Bishop, which I cannot now recollect, but I know, I was convinced at the time, that Skelton had gained a complete victory. Yet, however honourable all this might be to Mr. Skelton, or consistent with his duty, it could not at all be conducive to his private interest. Every victory of this sort

gained by a Curate over a Bishop, like that of Pyrrhus over the Romans, tends only to lessen his power, and may probably defeat him at last. The livings, as usual, were given away to others, and no notice taken of Skelton, who had then sufficiently distinguished himself by literature.

His constitution, he imagined, was impaired by the unlucky accident he met with at the long-bullets, and hence he became afterwards liable to the hips *, a disorder which continued to increase on him. Once, while curate of Monaghan, he was strangely affected by this imaginary malady. Mr. Hawkshaw and his lady going to Manor-water-House took him in their carriage along with him; but he had got only a short way on the road when he told them, that he was just on the point of death, and begged they would stop the carriage and let him out, that he might die in peace. He repeated his request three or four times without effect, for Mrs. Hawkshaw, who knew his little weakness, would not humour him in his notions. Her refusal, as it was expected, helped to cure him of his disorder, of which he got quite free before he arrived at the place appointed †. The most sensible men are liable to some infirmities, which

* Hips is a cant word signifying an hypochondriac complaint, with which the person possessed imagines himself sick when nothing ails him.

† I was told this anecdote at Monaghan, but not by Mr. Hawkshaw.

shows they are not excluded from the general lot of humanity.

He used to pay frequent visits to old Archdeacon Cranston, who lived near Monaghan, and generally walked to his house with a cudgel in his hand. One day, while he was thus equipt, he was attacked at the door by a huge mastiff, which he kept off with his cudgel after many attempts to get on him. This amused the old Archdeacon and Mr. Hawkshaw, who were looking on at the diversion.

The old Archdeacon had weathered it out then a long time. His death it seems had been often wished for, but this did him no harm ; he lived, if possible, the longer on that account. Mr. Skelton said to him one day, "you have lived a long time, Sir, in the diocess of Clogher, and I dare say you have seen many changes in it." "Oh yes (he replied in a drawling voice) I have seen a great many changes in it ; I remember about twenty years ago, the Bishop of Clogher of that time had a fine young man a nephew, whom he wished to promote highly in his diocess, and had given one good living already, which it seems was not enough for him, for he was going to get him married to Squire Knox's daughter of Dungannon. Upon this he told the Squire, that, beside the living he had, he would get my living, as I was just going to die ; but you see I have long outlived the nephew, and his uncle the Bishop too." "Well Sir," said Skelton, "would you be content to die now?"

"Why, if I could live till after the next crop would come in, for the sake of my friends, I would not care much." I then asked Mr. Skelton if he got the next crop? "Yes he did," he answered, "and another one too, and then he died."

He also went as often as convenient to see Mr. Pringle of Caledon, about ten miles from Monaghan, where he spent his time very pleasantly. On his first coming there he had a curious adventure which deserves to be related. Mr. Pringle's father, who was then alive, being very old and doting, was unfit to manage his house, which was left to the direction of his son, who in fact was master of all. Consequently, he had a right to ask what company he thought proper. This gentleman invited Mr. Skelton to dine with him, and Archdeacon East, who had lately come to the parish, telling them his father was doting, and not to be offended at any thing he said. When he introduced the Archdeacon to his father, he said, "father this is Archdeacon East the clergyman of the parish, who has come to dine with us to day." "Ay ay," observed the old man, "come East, come West, come North, come South, you all come here to fill your bellies." When dinner was brought in the old man refused to sit at the table with them, but took his seat in an adjoining room with the door quite open, where he watched them to see how much they would eat. Mr. Pringle placed Skelton just opposite the door,

desiring him to eat voraciously, and take large mouthfuls. Accordingly he began to devour up the dinner, as if he were starving, stuffing his mouth with huge lumps of meat and bread. The old man staring at him a while, at last cried to his son, "Johnny, Johnny, see that fellow, he'll eat you up." Skelton then shouted out aloud to the servant, "give me a tumbler of wine," whispering to him to put some water in it. "Ah ah!" the old man cried, "a whole tumbler of wine, Johnny don't give it to him; where did you come from, Sir?" After dinner, Mr. Skelton brought him a glass of wine, and bowing presented it to him, which he snapt from him, and drank up most greedily. When he gave it to him again, he said to him, "what trade are you, Sir?" "A gospeller," replied Skelton. "A gospeller, a gospeller, what trade's that?" "A preacher of the gospel." "Ah man!" he said, "that's a brave trade, I thought you were a pedler." In the evening a fine lady happened to be in company with him, who took great airs on her, but he soon said to her before a room full of people, "Madam, you are flanting about now with your fine dress, and think yourself so great, but I remember your father a poor servant in the country here." The old man, it seems, though he was doting, hit upon the truth.

Mr. Pringle in his will appointed Mr. Skelton executor to his children, an office which he discharged with great fidelity, as his son the present

Mr. Pringle of Caledon assured me. I question if he ever committed with his knowledge a single act of injustice.

Some years after, a Mr. Clarke, who had married his brother Thomas's daughter, made him executor, leaving his fortune at his disposal. To the widow, who, I believe, had no child, he gave as much as he thought just, and the rest to the Clarkes. This lady was afterwards married to Mr. Ennis an attorney.

Lord Orrery, when he lived at Caledon-castle, often invited Mr. Skelton to come and see him. Once his Lordship did him the honour to dine with him at his lodgings in Monaghan, a short time before he went to London to publish *Deism Revealed.*

This was a work, he thought, of too great importance to be published in Ireland, and therefore resolved to take it to London. Accordingly, his Rector having offered to do duty for him in his absence, and pay him his salary, he set out for that metropolis (in 1748) to dispose of it. In this expedition he was accompanied by a Mr. Thompson a clergyman.

Having taken Oxford in his way, he shewed his production to Dr. Connebear. This good man, who himself stood forth a strenuous supporter of our faith, after slightly looking over the manuscript, approved of it as far as he went. He then took down from his library the *Essays* of Mr. Hume,

whose curious method of weighing evidences, as a small dealer does his ware, is so much admired by his ingenious disciples. "Have you seen these," he said, "that were lately published?" Mr. Skelton replied he had not; but on reading parts of them here and there, he remarked that he had anticipated answers to the chief of Mr. Hume's objections. However, in compliance with Dr. Connebear's desire, he introduced Hume's cavils about a ballance, and answered them on the principles of common sense, which that gentleman, in his refinements, seems to have forgot. It is still to be lamented, that the enemies of truth are often superior to its friends in clearness of expression, and elegance of style, the chief requisites of an agreeable writer. The defenders of our holy religion, depending on the strength of their arguments, have sometimes paid too little attention to arrangement and perspicuity. Whereas the advocates for infidelity, who are destitute of solid arguments, endeavour to make amends for this defect, by the beauty of language, and allurements of eloquence, which, like the voice of the Syrens of old, are only designed to charm us to our ruin. "What's the reason, Sir, (I said to Mr. Skelton once) that these deistical writers Hume, Bolingbroke, and Gibbon are so clever, while their opponents, worthy good clergymen, are often inferior to them in point of composition?" "Do you think," he replied, "the Devil ever sent a

fool of his errand?" He then remarked, that God Almighty often made use of weak instruments, like him, in the support of his religion, to shew, that with the most puny defenders, he could overcome all the strength of his enemies. *For the weakness of God is stronger than man.*

Upon Mr. Skelton's arrival in London, he brought his manuscript to Andrew Millar the Bookseller, to know if he would purchase it, and have it printed at his own expense. The Bookseller desired him, as is usual, to leave it with him for a day or two, until he would get a certain gentleman of great abilities to examine it, who could judge, if the sale would quit the cost of printing. These gentlemen who examine manuscripts, in the Bookseller's cant, are called *triers.* "Can you guess (he said to me) who this gentleman was, that tried my *Deism Revealed.*" "No, I cannot." "Hume the infidel." He came it seems to Andrew Millar's, took the manuscript to a room adjoining the shop, examined it here and there for about an hour, and then said to Andrew, *print.* By Deism revealed he made about two hundred pounds. The bookseller allowed him for the manuscript a great many copies, which he disposed of himself among the citizens of London, with whom, on account of his preaching, he was highly famed. His powerful pulpit eloquence, which he displayed in their churches, brought him into notice. The citizens of London, to whom he afterwards dedicated a

Volume of Sermons, were, he said, at that time excellent men, and admirable judges of preaching.

Mr. Thompson and he took lodgings at a noted Coffee-House, where it seems accommodations of this sort were to be met with. He had an opportunity, he said, of making many observations on mankind, during his residence in that great city, which affords such an amazing variety of characters, and found his understanding to increase daily by his conversation with people of good sense and knowledge of the world ; whose observations made him discover many errors and deficiencies in his Deism Revealed, which he took care to rectify and supply, passing after his arrival there, a great part of his time altering and improving it. He spoke always with a degree of rapture of the citizens of London, from whom he received many public and private civilities. He had a letter of credit, he told us, upon a great merchant there, who, without regarding it, though it was very good, gave him money on his own account, saying, "Sir, I am to take as many of your books as will nearly amount to all this."

One day he went into a jeweller's shop in London to look at some articles of great value, which he was commissioned to buy ; and when he told him he could not purchase them, till he would get an acquaintance of skill to examine them, the jeweller, though a stranger to him, bade him take them with him, for he had an honest face, and he was sure he

would bring them back. This was a degree of confidence which an Irish visitant but rarely experiences in England.

He remarked, that the London merchants seldom had company at dinner, as their business prevented them from staying to enjoy the glass. But they made sufficient amends for this seeming stinginess by splendid and elegant suppers, furnished with every rarity and luxury. At these, he said, he passed many agreeable hours with company fit to entertain and instruct him. It was pleasant, he observed, to see merchants, many of whom had the whole, or at least the greater part of their property on sea, liable to the mercy of the winds and waves, relaxing themselves in private with as much ease and complacency, as if they had not a ship exposed to the fickle elements.

At one of these entertainments, he happened to meet with the late Dr. Lowth, who was afterwards raised by his learning to the bishoprick of London. Mr. Lowth was then, he said, a tall, thin, remarkably grave man. When he perceived Mr. Skelton was a clergyman from Ireland, he told him, he could have been highly promoted in the Irish church, but he refused it, as he did not wish to live in that country. "Well Sir," replied Skelton, "there are good pickings in the Irish church, and some of your countrymen have no objections to come over and take a large share of them, to the great sorrow of us poor clergymen natives of the

land." Mr. Lowth, like every man of genius, was sensible of his merits, which, he knew, must raise him in the English church, where learning and abilities are respected and rewarded. It was natural therefore, as he had a choice, that he preferred promotion in his own country. Mr. Skelton, with all the world, had a high opinion of that learned and ingenious prelate, the late ornament of the English church. "Lowth on the Prophecies of Isaiah," he said, "is the best book in the world next to the bible."

When he was in London, there was a man from the parish of Derriaghy, he assured us, that passed there for a wild Irishman, and was exhibited as a public show, dressed up with a false beard, artificial wings, and the like. Hundreds from all quarters flocked to see a strange spectacle, which they had often heard of before ; and among others, a Derriaghy man, who happened to be in London, came in the crowd, and saw the wild Irishman, a hideous figure, with a chain about him, cutting his capers before a gaping multitude. Yet notwithstanding his disguise, he soon discovered, that this wild Irishman was a neighbour's son, a sober civilized young man, who had left Derriaghy a little before him. When the show was finished he went behind the scene, and cried out so as to be heard by his countryman, "Derriaghy, Derriaghy." Upon this the seeming wild Irishman, staring with surprise, spoke aloud, "I'll go any

place for Derriaghy." They had then a private meeting, when he told him, that being scarce of money, he took that method of gulling the English, which succeeded far beyond his expectations.

Mr. Skelton, while in London, once attended the levee, dressed in his gown and band. The King, he said, being unable to lift up his feet as he walked, was forced to sweep them along the floor. His Majesty, as he passed him, stopped a while and looked in his face, which might be owing to his striking appearance. Some of his friends then whispered to him, "you are in the way of promotion, the King has you in his eye." Possibly his Majesty in his reign promoted persons less worthy of the royal patronage than the great and good Mr. Skelton.

He spent a great part of his time in going through the city purchasing books at a cheap rate, and laid out on these the most of the money he got by Deism Revealed, which afforded a good library for a curate. The managers of a Review offered, he said, at that time, to enrol him among their number, and give him a share of their profit, on condition of his staying in London. But he refused, for he thought an Irish curacy more secure bread, than the precarious subsistence to be acquired by criticism.

He went then, through curiosity, to a certain cheap place to get his dinner, which cost him three halfpence, for which he got a quart of thick

soup and a piece of bread. The soup was made up of broken meat collected from cook-shops, kitchens, and strolling beggars. However he did not choose to try the experiment a second time. He told us of this cheap dinner when he was teaching a young man to live on little money in Dublin.

In London he continued about half a year, and then returned to his curacy in Ireland. At sea, I am told, he had a dangerous voyage ; the vessel he sailed in being nearly lost. The newspapers indeed gave an account that it was wrecked, and that all on board perished. But it pleased God to preserve his life some time longer for the benefit of mankind.

The first edition of *Deism Revealed*, published by Andrew Millar, in 1749, is comprised in two tolerably large octavo volumes. It consists of eight dialogues ; in the first seven there are four, and in the eighth only two, speakers. At first three unbelievers attack one christian, who at last makes a convert of one of them, a young gentleman of great fortune, but of good sense and candour. In these dialogues, the most of the infidel objections against the gospel are introduced with their whole force, and fully and candidly answered. So that the book is rather a complete answer to deistical cavils, than a regular proof of the divine authority of the gospel. But if their cavils are proved groundless, christianity consequently is true.

The title of *Deism Revealed* shows it was intended to expose the craft of the infidels. In this book there is a great deal of good sense, sound argument, and original observation. It proves the author deeply read, and well acquainted with the subject of which he treats. But it is defective in point of arrangement; the matter is too loosely thrown together, the arguments do not follow each other in regular order. This remark, however, only holds good with respect to particular places. The style is also somewhat coarse; words are uselessly multiplied, and arguments drawn out beyond their proper bounds. The author, in his attempts at wit, frequently fails; he is merry himself, but the reader unhappily cannot join with him in the joke. True wit subsists where the writer is grave, and the reader merry.

This book was in high repute on its first publication. A second edition was required in a little more than a year. Among others, Dr. Delany admired it, well pleased with the growing fame of his pupil, to whom he had proved himself so sincere a friend. And even now, there is scarce any man of reading in this country that has not at least heard of Deism Revealed. A few months after its publication, the Bishop of Clogher happened to be in company with Dr. Sherlock, Bishop of London; who asked him if he knew the author of this book? "O yes," he answered carelessly, "he has been a curate in my diocess, near these twenty years."

"More shame for your Lordship," replied he, "to let a man of his merit continue so long a curate in your diocess."

The ingenious Bishop of London sent a message once to inform Mr. Skelton, that he would promote him in his diocess, if he would write a book upon christian morals. On which he desired the messenger to ask his Lordship, what objection he had to the *old Whole Duty of Man?* To this question he never received an answer. The *old Whole Duty of Man* was one of his favourite books. The style, he said, was admirably qualified for instruction, being so simple as to be easily understood by the most unlearned.

In 1749, he paid a visit to a distant northern Bishop of great consequence, whose lady was what you may call, *a learned woman*, and had such influence over her husband as often to dispose of the livings to her own favourites. So that, as Mr. Skelton remarked, the lady was a sort of a bishop herself. She was on this account courted by the clergy who humoured her in all her notions. She professed herself an admirer of Hutcheson's System of Moral Philosophy, and the clergy of consequence approved of her taste. As she had a respect for Mr. Skelton's judgment, she took the following method to find out his opinion on this subject. Having lately got a new book written by one of Hutcheson's disciples, she ordered it to be put in the room in which he slept, naturally

supposing he would examine it a little, and he did so. In the morning, an Archdeacon, by the lady's directions, came to Skelton's room to sound him on the book, and asked him carelessly if he had read any of it? Yes, he told him, he had looked into it here and there. He then asked him how he liked it? He said but indifferently, for he thought there was a great deal of nonsense in it. This brought on a sort of a scuffle between them. At last Skelton said he would lay him a wager, open the book at any page he pleased, and he would show him nonsense in it before he read to the bottom. The Archdeacon agreed; and while he was reading the page, Skelton stopped him now and then, and said, "that's nonsense;" "yes it is," he owned; and thus he was forced to acknowledge there was nonsense in every page of it. The Bishop's lady when she heard how contemptibly he spoke of the book which she so highly esteemed could scarce keep her temper; especially as she was accustomed to be flattered in her notions by the clergy, who would never oppose her. She therefore resolved to affront Mr. Skelton in an open company, supposing a poor Curate like him dare not say a word. Accordingly, after dinner, before the Bishop and a large company of clergy and others, she said to him, "Mr. Skelton, I heard you preached in St. James's chapel when you were in London." "Yes Madam, I did." "Well sir, a lady, a friend of mine who heard you, told me

you preached very absurdly, talking of hell's fire, and such coarse subjects, as are never introduced in so polite a place." "Pray Madam, who is this lady, a friend of yours, that made these remarks on my preaching?" "Such a lady, Sir," she answered, naming her. "Oh!" he said, "she has a good right not to like sermons about hell's fire, for she is whore to the Archbishop of York, all London knows it."

This Bishop, whose lady was so learned, having a niece unmarried, some people advised Mr. Skelton to court her and marry her, observing that he would get a good living by it; but they could not prevail on him to seek for preferment from a connection with that lady.

However, the time of his being promoted above the humble office of a curate at length arrived. In the year 1750, a large living fell in the diocess of Clogher; and immediately on the vacancy Dr. Delany and another Bishop waited on Bishop Clayton, and told him, that if he did not give Skelton a living now, after disappointing them so often, they would take him out of his diocess. The Bishop then gave him the living of Pettigo in a wild part of the county of Donegal, having made many removals on purpose to put him in that savage place, among mountains, rocks, and heath. In the living of Pettigo he succeeded a Mr. Lindsay, who was removed to Enniskillen. When he had got this living he had been eighteen years Curate

of Monaghan, and two of Newtown-Butler, during which time he saw, as he told me, many illiterate boys put over his head, and highly preferred in the church without ever serving a cure.

The name of the parish is properly Templecarn; but as the church is placed in the small village of Pettigo, the people by custom call it the parish of Pettigo. This village is situate on the extremity of the counties of Donegal and Fermanagh; a little river that runs through it, over which a bridge is built, separates these counties from each other. It has a sort of a market on a Monday, and some stated fairs in the year. Even then there was probably some culture about this village, but the parts of the county of Donegal adjacent, and to a great extent, in which Mr. Skelton's parish lay, were mostly wild, mountainous, covered over with heath. The parish of Pettigo is fifteen miles long, and ten broad; of this he had the whole tithes, and had also a glebe of a hundred and fifty acres situate in the county of Fermanagh. Yet, strange as it may seem, tithe and glebe did not on an average produce two hundred pounds a year. Possibly he might have scraped up a little more, had he been rigid in demanding his dues; though it is allowed that scarce a fourth part of the parish was arable. One Robert Plunket, brother to the Dissenting Minister, came with him from Monaghan, and got a cabin in Pettigo, with some land adjacent. He appointed him his tithe-

farmer, and also agreed with him for his diet and lodging.

The nature of the people was similar to that of the soil ; they were rough, uncultivated, disorderly, fond of drinking and quarrelling. Mr. Skelton, by the account he heard of them, which however was greatly exaggerated, was really afraid they would kill him in that wild country, and therefore took with him from Monaghan, by way of servant, one Jonas Good, a great boxer, to defend him ; a man of a decent family, who had a small freehold near that town, and yet consented to go with him through respect for his character. When he was agreeing with Jonas, he said to him, "I hire you to fight, at which I am told you are very clever." The man said he could do a little that way, that he had never served any one before but the King, and he would serve him too, he was so good a man. "Well Sir, you must fight bravely ; when you see me laying down my hands, be sure do the same, then strike stoutly, and when I stop, stop you." The man promised he would do so. To make him look more terrible, he got him a good horse, and a military saddle with holsters, in which he put two large pistols, and equipt him suitably in other particulars ; though he did not dress him in livery, but in plain grave clothes. All this made his appearance decent and formidable, for he was a large able-bodied man. In their travels he always rode before him to face the danger, and got all the

bows, as the people mistook him for the master. Mr. Skelton gave it out through the country, to raise a terror of him, that he could easily beat three or four men, which excited the envy of some wicked people, who way-laid Jonas at night, and beat him most shockingly.

His parishioners were sunk in profound ignorance. One could hardly have supposed, on viewing their manners, that they were born and bred in a christian country. Yet many of them were nominally protestants. Mr. Skelton declared, they scarce knew more of the gospel than the Indians of America; so that, he said, he was a Missionary sent to convert them to christianity. Like others in a rude state, their chief study was to supply their natural wants, and indulge their gross appetites. The most of them seemed ignorant of the use of books, which they thought very few applied to but for some bad purpose. Mr. Skelton assured me, that soon after he came to Pettigo he was reading one evening in his room by candlelight, with the window shuts open, and heard many people whispering in the street at his window, which brought him to the door to see what was the matter, when he found a whole crowd of people listening and watching him; for it seems they thought he was a conjurer he dealt so much in books. So true is the observation of Swift's,

Thus clowns on scholars as on wizards look,
And take a folio for a conj'ring book.

Such were the people whom he was appointed to instruct. To a benevolent clergyman like him it surely gave concern, to see them in this state of ignorance and error. He had a wide field for improvement before him, and began to work immediately. He visited them from house to house; he instructed them late and early; he told them of Jesus Christ who died for their sins, whose name some of them had scarce heard of before. In his journies through the parish he took down the children's names, desiring their parents to send them to church to be instructed in the catechism; and introduced the proof-catechism such as he had already made use of at Monaghan. During the summer, while he was thus employed, he explained the catechism on Sundays before all the people, which served to edify both young and old. At this lecture or explanation he spent an hour and a half every Sunday the whole summer season. He gave the people this instead of a sermon, as it seemed to please them better, being delivered without notes, and also remarkably plain and instructive. He was thus, like Job, *eyes to the blind and feet to the lame.* When he had reason to suppose that the grown-up people were tolerably acquainted with their duty, by means of his public and private lectures, and admonitions, he locked the church door on a Sunday, when he had a large congregation, and examined them all to see what progress they had made under his care in religious

knowledge. He would not intimate to them the day he intended to do this, well knowing, if he did, that few or none of them would come. He thus endeavoured to work upon their shame, which is often a more powerful motive with men than the dread of temporal or eternal evils. In time, by his extraordinary care, he brought these uncultivated people to believe in a God who made them, and a Saviour that redeemed them.

Sir James Caldwell's residence being at the extremity of his parish, he preached once in the month, on a Sunday, in his parlour, where he had a tolerable congregation, and used also to examine the people there in religion. He was once examining some persons of quality there, when one of them told him there were two Gods, and another three Gods, and so on. Such was their ignorance. One of them indeed who had nothing to say, every question he was asked, made a genteel bow, in which he was better instructed than in religion.

In Pettigo the greater number of the inhabitants were poor catholics living in wretched hovels among barren rocks and heath; of whom there were many real objects of charity, that required the assistance of the humane. In such a place the benevolent disposition of Mr. Skelton found full room for exercise; and I may safely say, that no human breast ever had more genuine charity than his. His wonderful acts of goodness will be remembered for ages in that remote corner of the

North, and be transmitted from father to son for successive generations. But a particular display of them is reserved for its proper place.

On his first coming there, he made an agreement with his hearers to give as much in charity in the church, as the whole collection on a Sunday should amount to. But when he perceived the people began to give less than what they used, he said to them, "farewell conjunction for the time to come; you are now falling short of what you gave at first, but you shall not confine my charity;" and then divided his own portion among the poor every month.

He also practised physic at Pettigo as at Monaghan, and bestowed on his people medicines that he had procured for the purpose. His medicines and advice must have been indispensibly requisite in a country so uncivilized, where such assistance could not be easily obtained. Yet in dangerous cases he would not depend on his own skill, but sent fourteen miles off to Enniskillen for his intimate friend Dr. Scott, to whom, for his trouble in attending his parishioners, he allowed, I am assured, rent-free, the whole glebe of the parish of Pettigo, already mentioned, which is now set for forty pounds a year.

Soon after he got this living, the Bishop of Clogher let him know by a message, that he expected he would preach the next visitation-sermon. Though he was unwilling, as some

others, who were promoted before him, had not then preached, yet he promised to prepare himself for it. But his Lordship had soon reason to suspect he would speak some disagreeable truths in his sermon, and make some sharp remarks on those clergymen who enjoy ecclesiastic emoluments, though they disbelieve or oppose the principal doctrines contained in our articles. Consequently, as he was afraid, that some of the weapons the preacher would dart from the pulpit might hit himself, he began to repent that he had offered to put him in a situation so convenient for him to make his attack upon others. His apprehension, increasing daily as the visitation approached, caused him to send to him a favourite clergyman, one happily of his own religious notions, to inform him, that the Bishop would not ask him to preach at the visitation. But having, in compliance with his Lordship's desire, made a sermon for the purpose, he told the clergyman, that he had prepared his sermon, and that he would preach it at the visitation. The Bishop, it may be supposed, did not interpose his authority, and therefore he preached his sermon entitled *the Dignity of the Christian Ministry* at the visitation in 1751. This probably is one of the best occasional sermons of this sort extant in our language. Its style is clear, forcible, animated with true piety. He makes in it a very proper distinction between the temporal dignity derived from the possession of worldly goods, and the

spiritual dignity conferred by Jesus Christ upon the ministers of his gospel. To quote every excellent part in this sermon, would be indeed to quote the whole; and it is impossible to contract it, as it contains almost as many thoughts as words. The Bishop himself, and all double-dealers in the church got a gentle rub as he passed; but he made no personal application. For any further particulars the inquisitive reader is referred to the sermon itself.

The publication of the *Essay on Spirit*, which made a great noise in the world, produced, as might be expected, some very severe answers. Mr. Skelton, who apprehended not without reason, that the Bishop suspected him to be author of some one of them, wrote him a letter (in 1752) assuring his Lordship he was not. He used to say in private companies, that he would not write against the Bishop, as he considered himself under obligations to him for the living of Pettigo. Yet his solemn asseverations were not sufficient to remove his Lordship's scruples, who notwithstanding, under pretence of being convinced by his letter, dined with him afterwards in Pettigo.

The want of rational company seemed to add to the natural gloominess of the place. Pettigo he called Siberia, and said he was banished to it from all civilized society. I heard him often declare, he was forced to ride seven miles before he could meet with a person of common sense to converse

with. He found it necessary, in his own defence, to take frequent excursions to hear some rational conversation, and to get rid for a while of the illiterate people of Pettigo, whose lingo was constantly dinned into his ears. Sir James Caldwell, Dr. Scott, Rev. Dr. Mc. Donnel, Rev. Mr. Wallace, and some other clergy of the diocess of Clogher, were the persons he used generally to visit.

Plunket, with whom he lodged, could give him but one room with an earthen floor where he slept and studied ; in which he had a screen or curtain so fixed that he could let it down upon occasions to conceal his bed. Here Sir James Caldwell, and other gentlemen of the country, have dined with him ; for he was always fond of polished society. His chief meal at that time was his dinner, as he eat but little breakfast, and no supper ; a sort of abstinence he found requisite to keep his passions in due order. He was for the same reason equally abstemious in sleep as in food ; for he took but four hours sleep, and passed the rest of the night in prayer and meditation. Being at that time unhappily afflicted with religious melancholy, to which many good men are liable, he was seized with doubts about his salvation, and in the middle of the night often fell a crying, imagining he should be damned, he was so sinful a creature. While he was in these gloomy fits, he used to raise the man of the house out of his bed, and beg of him to waken the rest of the family, that he

and they might pray with him, as he stood in need of all good-christian's prayers, his case was so desperate. I heard this from a Lady who slept in a room adjoining his at the time. The poor man of the house strove to comfort him, telling him he was a pious charitable clergyman, and that there were few or none as good as he; so that he had no reason to have such scruples about his salvation. These gloomy notions were partly produced by his lonely sequestered life, for solitude is the parent of melancholy.

He was also at that time, on the same account, more liable to the hips, imagining often that he was just on the point of death. One day he told his servant that his hour was approaching, and his thread of life spent, and desired him to get the horses ready, that he might go to Dr. Scott's and die there. The servant obeyed; but when he got a short way on the road, he began to whistle and sing, and said he was happy. The ride, it is to be supposed, helped to raise his spirits, an effect which it is often able to produce.

However, a ride had not always this happy effect on him. He rode to Dr. Scott's again when he had the same complaint. The Doctor being then abroad, Mrs. Scott, on his appearing uneasy, offered to send for him; on which he began to hesitate, now he allowed her; then he refused; and continued in this wavering state until evening, when he told her, he would die that night in her

house. This dismal news frightened her so, that she could not sleep the whole night. She lay in a room adjoining his, and was always listening if she could hear him breathe, which he did stoutly and strongly. The Doctor, who came home in the morning, on his inquiring into his case, would prescribe nothing to him but a glass of wine.

Once more he came to Dr. Scott's when he was similarly affected, accompanied by Robert Plunket with whom he lodged, and assured the Doctor, as usual, he would die that night; but he cured him by a little wine, and company. In the morning he sent for a taylor to take his measure for a suit of clothes, when Plunket coming in observed, that he thought the undertaker would be taking his measure for a coffin. He told him, he was growing better, but if he died, the clothes would suit some one else.

Another time, while these plaguy hips were on him, and he was telling the people about him, that he was just going to die, one Robert Johnston of Pettigo who was present said to him, "make a day, Sir, and keep it, and don't be always disappointing us thus." This made him laugh, and shook off his disorder. It may be remarked, that all this tends to degrade the person whose life I write; but in my opinion it only shows, that he had his own peculiarities, to which great characters are in general more subject than ordinary men.

The private stills in the parish of Pettigo being

at that time innumerable, made the whiskey cheap and plenty, which caused the people to be addicted to drunkenness, a vice among others prevalent there. The catholics, who were most numerous, were chiefly remarkable for this; though the protestants, as they called themselves, were but little better. At burials in particular, to which they flocked from all quarters, they drank most shamefully. It was the custom then with them, as soon as the corpse was buried, to meet all in a field adjacent to the churchyard, and pour whiskey, like cold water, down their throats. Twenty gallons of strong spirits of whiskey have been often drunk at such a meeting. When their blood was sufficiently heated by the spirits, they then, as it was natural, fell a boxing with one another, probably the near relations of the deceased, and thus cut and bruised each other most terribly. Many have been killed at such riotous meetings, either by quarrelling or whiskey.

Mr. Skelton told me a story that marks clearly the savage manners of the people. One of these Pettigo men came up to him one day with joy in his face, and said to him; "O! we had the finest "drinking ever was two or three days ago; we "were all drinking in a field after a burial, and "we drank two or three kegs of strong whiskey. "While we were drinking the last keg, a poor "fellow (he said mimicking him) who sat on the "grass near me, fell down on his back, and then

"gave a shake or two with his hands and feet, "and stirred no more. We looked at him, and "found he was quite dead; then we took an empty "keg, and clapt it on his breast, and shouted, "we'd have another fine drinking bout at his "burial. Then we waked him that night; and "next day, at the burial, we drank strong whiskey, "as much as before. So we had fine sport." The wild parts of Munster or Connaught could scarce exhibit such savage barbarity of manners.

Mr. Skelton strove with all his power to break them off from this brutish practice. Those he could prevail on he made swear against drinking, and in his own church he preached against it. A sermon he preached to them on this subject is printed in his works, entitled *Wo to the Drunkard*; which, had they the feelings of common men, must have had an effect on them, especially when delivered by such a preacher as Mr. Skelton. Yet his advice and preaching produced in this instance but little reformation. Whiskey was plenty, and the vice was established by long practice. It is almost impossible to make people break off at once from customs of this sort, sanctioned by time, and pleasing to their appetites. The advance from barbarism to civility must, like every other improvement, be gradual. His own hearers were probably in some degree reclaimed by him from beastly drunkenness. He strove also to limit the expenses of all his people at christen-

ings and marriages; for they usually spent all they could scrape together at these, and afterwards were in a manner starving. I heard of a curious answer an old woman of Pettigo made him, when he was just going to marry her to a young man. "What's the reason," he said to her, "you're doing this; 'tis for your penny of money he marries you, sure he hates you, for you're both old and ugly." "Don't despise," she replied, "the Lord's handy work;" meaning herself.

He began himself indeed at that time to feel the want of a wife; not I believe from any unruly propensities towards the fair sex, for he was then bordering upon fifty. But he perceived, I should think, the use of having a gentle partner through life, as a partaker in his joys and sorrows, an assistant in sickness, and consoler in adversity. However, for some reasons or other he began then to repent, he had not married when he was young, and used frequently to exclaim, "would to God I had married a servant maid!" It was reported then he was jilted in his younger days, which gave him a distaste to marriage. This indeed is not improbable, as men of sense are as liable as any others to be deceived by the arts of women. Yet in my various and familiar conversations with him he never gave me a hint of this, which is a misfortune that men generally wish to keep to themselves. Some time after, he owned in a large company at Enniskillen, that he never had carnal

knowledge of a woman; on which an old lady, who was present, told him plainly she did not believe him.

Yet he was very sensible of the obligation that lies on parents to take care of their offspring. A man who had a numerous family of children, his wife having a child every year, being reduced to poverty by giving bail for another, came to him once to ask for assistance, setting forth his melancholy story. "What (he said to him) you had so many children, and yet you bailed a man; you ought not to have any, for you are not fit to take care of them." He then supplied him with present aid, and promised to settle five guineas a year on him, upon condition his wife should have no more children; observing, that one so careless as he ought not to enjoy conjugal gratifications.

His eminent virtues and charities gained him the love and respect of most of his people, and his courage, strength and activity, made him dreaded by those who could be only influenced by fear. Upon his arrival at Pettigo he found the people, as I mentioned before, rude and disorderly, fond of rioting and quarrelling. Among these there were bullies, who, ruling over the rest, wished also to bully Mr. Skelton, and keep him down; but they were disappointed in the man they had to deal with. He told me, that one of them called Acheson came into his room one day to insult him; but he fell on him, and cuffed him

and turned him out of the house. This same man came once into his church when he was drunk, and disturbed him so in his duty, that he was obliged to dismiss his congregation.

It appears he had no objection at that time, as usual, to try his strength on occasions. Some people raising stones at Pettigo came to one too heavy for them; upon which Skelton, who was present, told them they were a parcel of rats, and taking the crow-iron in his hand raised the stone, but broke the crow-iron in the experiment.

One Graham a farmer coming up to him one day in a garden offered to wrestle with him. "What," said he, "you insignificant little fellow would you presume to wrestle with me?" And then took him by the collar, and threw him down among the keal.

His lonely situation at Pettigo gave him more leisure for study. In 1753 he published the *Consultation*, or *a Dialogue of the Gods, in the manner of Lucian;* sed magno discrimine. It is intended to ridicule the Arians, whom it represents as a sort of polytheists; because they hold one supreme and other inferior Gods. Jupiter of consequence and his clan are fond of the Arians, who, they say, are their friends, and may be the means of bringing them once more into fashion. His attempts at wit are certainly laudable, as employed in a good cause, but they are not so successful as I could wish.

In this or the following year he went to London

again to publish his Discourses ; the neighbouring clergy in his absence attending his church, as I was assured by an old clergyman who preached there in his turn. This clergyman told me, that he copied over his discourses for the press, an assistance he always made use of when he could obtain it ; for he disliked copying, which is but a servile employment, especially, I suppose, as he was not very *fair at it*, if one may judge by his handwriting in his letters. I could hear of no adventure on this second visit to London worth relating. We may suppose indeed he returned as soon as convenient to his parish, which was so much the object of his care.

In 1754, his two volumes of sermons were published by Andrew Millar, entitled *Discourses Controversial and Practical on Various subjects, Proper for the Consideration of the Present Times. By the Author of Deism Revealed.* To his first volume is prefixed a *Preface addressed to the Clergy of the Church of England*, and to his second another *addressed to the Citizens of London.* The corrupt and dangerous opinions that were then beginning to prevail he makes, in his first preface, his apology for publishing his controversial discourses. In his second he expresses his gratitude to the citizens of London for their civilities to him, during the time he lived among them ; and mentions, as I collect from his preface, that partly at the request of some of these, and partly to animate men, if possible, with some

religious warmth, *in this winter of christianity*, he offers his practical discourses to the public. To the preface of each volume he signs his name.

In these discourses there is abundance of good sense and original thought. He is no servile copier of others, but draws his arguments from scripture and his own understanding, his picture of human motives and actions from a close observation of mankind. He read few sermons, he said, that those he wrote might, if possible, be his own; and I believe but very few can be more justly than his styled the real property of their respective authors. Of these sermons I could quote many passages striking and sublime, produced at once by his own fertile capacity. For he took too little care in his compositions, and depended mostly on his genius, whence chiefly arose all his faults. Hence the vast inequality in his sermons; some of which are composed in a pure and elegant style, and others in one coarse and obscure. Yet there is scarce one of them that does not prove him to be a man of parts. It must also be observed, that they are all animated with a warm and genuine piety, and an ardent desire for the salvation of men's souls, which will be esteemed by a devout christian an excellence sufficient to make amends for their defects.

These sermons were remarkable for their orthodoxy; some of them indeed were written on purpose to prove the Trinity and Atonement;

which he told us, gave offence to the Reviewers, who were very sharp in their remarks on him, and called him an orthodox bully. They quoted him he said, very unfairly, for they took a piece of a sentence in one part, and another piece in another, and then patching them up together, said, "this is nonsense." He then made an observation on Reviewers, which it is not I think prudent to mention.

He told me, that soon after his Discourses were published, some one came into the present Marquis of L ————'s chambers at Oxford, where he was then a student, and saw Skelton's discourses before him, which caused him to ask, why he troubled his head reading sermons, as he knew he was easy about any religion? He said, he happened to look into a sermon entitled the *Cunning Man*, which engaged his attention a little, as the Author was describing his father. Mr. Skelton said, he did not at that time know his father, who was a remarkably cunning man, and kept his son closely pinched at the university, which made him suppose that the character in the sermon alluded to him.

About two years after he came to Pettigo, Robert Plunket removed to a farm a mile distant from that village, whither Mr. Skelton accompanied him, and lodged with him two or three years more, until he and his family went to America to another brother, who had made a fortune on that continent. I was shown in the garden a seat in a tree adjoining

a murmuring brook, where Mr. Skelton used to read. He then took lodgings with one Carshore, a low farmer in the village of Pettigo. His situation here was even more inconvenient than at Plunket's. He had indeed wretched lodgings. The floor of the room was not only earthen, but also so uneven, that he was forced to get a table with two long and two short feet to fit it. He also found it necessary to buy a pair of tweezers, to pick the dirt out of the keal which they served up to his dinner.

Some gentlemen who came to see him there, went out and killed a few wood-cocks, which they desired the people of the house to roast for their dinner with the train in them, as is usual. A short time after, when he had company to dine with him, they served up to them a turkey-cock roasted with the guts in it, which they imagined to be the most fashionable way. At length, he was obliged to send Carshore's daughter to Dr. Madden's, to get a little knowledge of cookery, which she stood much in need of.

Carshore had two sons, William and Thomas. William was born nearly blind; but in a few years after lost what little sight he had by the measles. However, Mr. Skelton perceiving him to be a young man of extraordinary understanding, and surprisingly acquainted with the scriptures, employed him to go through the parish during the winter, to instruct his people in religion, and

in the summer examined them himself, to know what benefit they had derived from his instruction. The most of the time I was at Pettigo I spent in his company, and found him to be one of the most rational, agreeable, sensible men I ever saw. The methodists strove to bring him over to their opinions; for they always wish to deal with persons that have some natural defect, that the interposition of the spirit may be more apparent. But he had too much good sense to become a convert to their odd notions.

His brother was by nature disabled in his limbs; he was *reel-footed*, as they call it; which signifies, that his feet were bent under him; by means of which he was unable to earn his bread by labour. Mr. Skelton, through pity, taught him to read and write, and also made him shave a wig-block in his room every day, giving him some curious directions, that he might learn to shave thus human faces, and earn his bread by it. He also sent him to Monaghan to learn the wig-making trade, and afterwards to Armagh to learn to sing psalms; upon which occasions he defrayed all his expenses. He and his brother at present serve between them the office of clerk in the Church of Pettigo.

When he lodged at Carshore's, he became extremely fond of flowers, and used to send twenty miles off to get a curious one. These were planted in Carshore's garden; every scarce flower having a paper affixed to it with its name. Those who

are at a loss for company often seek for amusement from things inanimate. He used then in cold weather to go through Pettigo with a straw-rope about him, to keep his big coat on; being never very fond of finery; nor was it indeed requisite in that remote part of our island.

The course of my narrative leads me to one of the most conspicuous periods of his life. In 1757, a remarkable dearth prevailed in Ireland; the effects of which were felt most severely in the rough and barren lands of Pettigo. Mr. Skelton went out then into the country to discover the real state of his poor, and travelled from cottage to cottage over mountains, rocks, and heath. He was then a witness to many scenes of sorrow, to which the gay world were insensible, and which could be only felt by a soul so sympathetic as his. In one cabin he found the people eating boiled prushia * by itself for their breakfast, and tasted this sorry food which seemed nauseous to him. Next morning he gave orders to have prushia gathered and boiled for his own breakfast, that he might live on the same sort of food with the poor. He eat this for one or two days; but at last his stomach turning against it, he set off immediately for Ballyshannon to buy oatmeal for them, and brought thence with all speed as much as appeased the hunger of some of them. He also gave money to one Hanna to go through the parish,

* A weed with a yellow flower that grows in corn fields.

and distribute it among those who were in great distress. By this supply, some of the poor who were so weak with hunger that they could not rise out of their beds, in eight days grew so strong as to be able to get up.

When he had thus afforded them present relief, he went to Ballyhayes in the county of Cavan, and brought thence oatmeal which he could buy at a cheaper rate. He then set out through the country to see what subsistence the indigent people had in their wretched hovels, and used to look into the crocks and chests in which they kept their meal, and count their number of children, that he might be a better judge of their necessities. To some he gave one peck, to others more, according to their wants, and to those who could afford to pay a little he allowed meal at about half value. He thus like his great master *went about doing good.*

One day, when he was travelling in this manner through the country, he came to a lonely cottage in the mountains, where he found a poor woman lying in child bed with a number of children about her. All she had, in her weak helpless condition, to keep herself alive and her children, was blood and sorrel boiled up together. The blood, her husband, who was a herd, took from the cattle of others under his care, for he had none of his own. This was a usual sort of food in that country, in times of scarcity; for they bled the cows for that purpose, and thus the same cow often afforded

both milk and blood. Mr. Skelton tasted the odd mixture, the only cordial the poor woman had to strengthen her in her feeble state. His tender heart being touched at the sight, he went home immediately, and sent her a hundred of meal, a pound of brown sugar, and a bottle of brandy. He then visited her every second day in her cot among the mountains, bestowing on her such comforts as seemed requisite, until she recovered.

At that time, he and Jonas Good, the strong man, regulated Pettigo market on a Monday, standing among the meal-sacks, each of them with a huge club in his hand, and covered over with meal. They were obliged then, when the carriers were bringing the meal to Pettigo, to guard it with their clubs, as the people of the adjacent parishes strove to take it by force, and eat it themselves; in which they sometimes succeeded; for hunger makes people desperate.

When he had procured some meal to supply the immediate wants of the necessitous, he sent off to Drogheda for flax to them, and having it carried to Pettigo, bestowed on them in greater or less quantities, according to the number of people in a family that could spin. The yarn thus made was sold every market-day, and the money it produced placed in his hands, as also the earnings of the men, in return for the meal and flax he gave them for the succeeding week; but this far exceeded in value the pittance the women could

earn by spinning, or the men by labour. He thus made them contribute their industry to their own support. On those who were unable to work he bestowed meal sufficient for their subsistence; and with the money produced by the earnings of the people, and what he could scrape together of his own, he bought more meal and flax, and thus daily strove to preserve them.

For some time he was tolerably successful; but at last his money was nearly all spent, and yet he knew the dearth must continue many weeks more, until the new crop would relieve the poor. He was then very apprehensive, lest, after keeping them alive so long, he should see them at last dying of hunger. This forced him to an expedient extremely unpleasant for a scholar excluded, as he was, from all civilized society. He resolved to sell his books, the companions of his solitude, and relieve his indigent parishioners with the money. With this intent he sent them to Dublin to William Watson the bookseller in Capel-street, desiring him to dispose of them immediately; who, in compliance with his orders, advertised them for sale in the newspapers. But as buyers were tardy, and the wants of the poor very urgent, Mr. Watson bought them himself for eighty pounds, and instantly paid the money. Soon after the advertisement appeared in the newspapers, two ladies, who guessed at his reason for selling his books, sent him a fifty pound bill, requesting him

to keep the books, and relieve his poor with the money. These ladies did not discover their names; but I am assured, that one of them was Lady Barrymore, who gave twenty, and the other a Miss Leslie, who gave thirty pounds. However, with expressions of gratitude he told them, he had dedicated his books to God, and he must sell them. Consequently, the contribution of the ladies, and the money he got for his books, were both applied to the relief of his poor. This was a sacrifice to duty of which no one can have an adequate idea, except a scholar, fond of reading situate, like Mr. Skelton, in a coarse barren country, among illiterate people, with a number of agreeable books, the only companions of his many solitary hours.

Such were the exertions, and extraordinary charities, of this exemplary clergyman, employed in a time of scarcity for the preservation of his poor parishioners. He was indeed like an angel sent down from heaven to visit them in their distress. A few such primitive apostolic christians in this kingdom might almost be sufficient to avert the divine judgment off the land, which God knows how soon may overtake us for our sins.

In the disposal of his charities, he made no distinction with respect to the religion of the persons, as the only claim they had to offer was poverty and want. Indeed he frequently declared, that during the several dearths in which he had the care of a parish, his charities were mostly

conferred on Roman catholics; for these, when they got a little money, spent it all profusely in drinking and carousing, without laying by a penny for any unforeseen accident, and consequently, in times of scarcity, should, many of them, have died of hunger, had they not been relieved. But protestants of every description being more œconomical generally had something saved, and of course, when a famine prevailed, stood in less need of assistance.

It is necessary to mention, that Mr. Watson sold a part of the books; those that remained, Mr. Skelton, when he could afford it, took from him at the price he sold them for, but insisted on paying interest for the sum they amounted to, for the time Mr. Watson had them in his possession.

He continued for a few years to lock the church door at intervals, while he examined the grown-up people in religion; but was at last forced to desist as a woman fainted in the church, because she could not get out. However he did not on this account leave off examining them, as usual. It was a fashion with them then to be still going out and coming in, during the time of service, which obliged him at length to speak out to them thus from the reading-desk, "remark the disturbers of God's worship." This rebuke partly cured them of the irregularity.

All his exertions were indeed scarce sufficient to keep his people in due order. Among their other

bad practices, they used to steal timber from the adjoining woods. One man, who was notorious for this, he forced with much difficulty to swear to take no more in future. A hearer of his who, he was told, had taken a bundle of scollops and some timber out of Rapee-wood in the county of Fermanagh, kneeling one Sunday at the sacrament, had got the bread, and was just getting the wine, when looking in his face, he perceived who he was, and then stopt short, and said to him, "you have stolen a part of the Lord's sacrament, but you shall get no more." The man replied to him very sharply. However he was afterwards reconciled to this man, and invited him to dine with him.

Doctor Clayton, the Bishop of Clogher, was, it is well known, a strenuous opposer of the most essential doctrine of the orthodox faith. He declared his disbelief of some of the articles of our church to which he had solemnly subscribed; though he had no scruple of conscience to enjoy the ample revenue it afforded him. His Lordship, it seems, was not content with the consciousness of having found out by his sagacity the right opinion himself, but, like some others of the same stamp, had a longing desire to make converts. When he was putting down on paper his strange notions in his study, his lady used to come in, and say to him, "My Lord, quit writing, or you'll lose your bishoprick." But he would not be persuaded

by her; the world was all wrong, he said, and he would strive to set it right. Accordingly, beside the Essay on Spirit, he published afterwards some other pieces, in which he declared his sentiments too plainly on the subject of the Trinity. This gave occasion for an open attack on him in the House of Lords, when Primate Stone made a very severe speech against him. The House resolving to deprive him of his bishoprick, summoned him to appear before them. He then consulted a great lawyer on the subject, and asked him, if he thought he would lose his bishoprick? "My Lord," he answered, "I believe you will." "Sir," he replied, "you have given me a stroke I'll never get the better of." His apprehensions were unfortunately too true; for he was instantly seized with a disorder, and soon after died in 1758.

A lady, who usually had a correspondence with Mr. Skelton, in a letter she wrote him from Dublin, mentioned, among other transactions, the Bishop's death, and the probable cause of it. In his answer he lamented the Bishop's fate, and thought his gentle spirit could not bear the severity he experienced, but that it broke his heart. The world knows how strenuous an advocate he was for those religious opinions that are exactly contrary to his Lordship's; but his gratitude for the benefice he had conferred on him made him feel so sensibly for his condition. This Bishop, with all his odd notions, was a useful man to the

poor. Being a member of the linen board, he got a great many wheels and reels for the poor about Clogher, and thus kept the most of them employed. He also had the honour of giving Mr. Skelton his first living, which, if he pleased, he might have refused to his dignified solicitors.

In the see of Clogher, he was succeeded by Dr. Garnet, a prelate of great humility, and a friend to literature and religion. This Bishop, though he had but one eye, could discover, as I am told, men of merit, as well as some people with two eyes. Sensible that Mr. Skelton was a man of worth and parts, he treated him with the respect such men deserve. A superior, who treats a man of learning and abilities with coldness and indifference, shows he has no regard for literature.

About this time a pamphlet appeared in Dublin entitled *An Appeal to the Common Sense of all Christian People.* This being an artful defence of the Arian opinions, which the author insinuated were alone consistent with common sense, was written with so much cunning, and such a show of candour, that it had a dangerous effect on many well-meaning people. An Answer was published to it in about half a year, consisting of above two hundred duodecimo pages, which was ascribed to Mr. Skelton. It is really a masterly performance, and exceeding in style and manner any of his former compositions, completely overturns, at least in my opinion, the author's objections, and proves

the doctrine of the Trinity from the very texts he quotes against it. This piece is not contained in the five volumes of his works published in 1770. But as the Appeal had sunk into obscurity, it was probably thought needless to republish the answer.

In the parish of Pettigo, about three miles from the little village, is situate Lough-Derg, so much famed over Europe for the holy exercises performed by the pious pilgrims that resort to it. From the twelfth of May, till the latter end of August, the village is crowded with pilgrims, either going, or returning from that place; and the public houses of Pettigo get many a good penny from these *spiritual* visitants, who are sufficiently liberal in spending their money on whiskey. Mr. Skelton wrote a description of Lough-Derg, so remarkable for its surprising qualities, in a letter to the Bishop of Clogher, which made its way into the newspapers without a name; but he afterwards thought fit to claim it as his property, and publish it in his works. It is needless to be more particular about a place that has so often employed the pen of the curious.

A poor blind man, called Petty, who lost both his eyes by boxing, had a cabin just adjoining Lough-Derg, and usually got a halfpenny out of sixpence-halfpenny Irish given by every pilgrim, or stationer, for the boat which carried them over to the island. On a complaint made against him to the titular Bishop and Prior, his cabin was

thrown down, and himself banished. Mr. Skelton, who pitied his case, when the Bishop came to Lough-Derg, invited him to dine with him, and got Petty restored, who continued there to the year 1786, when he died. A priest, who was also turned out, by his means got his place again. Such was his interest with the titular Bishop.

In 1759, the Bishop of Clogher, without any solicitation, removed him from Pettigo to Devenish, a living in the county of Fermanagh, near Enniskillen, worth about three hundred a year. Thus, by the kindness of the good Bishop, he was brought once more into civilized society, after continuing ten years in that rugged part of Ireland, where his virtues and charities shall long be remembered*. When he was leaving Pettigo, he said to the poor, "give me your blessing now before I go, and God's blessing be with you. When you are in great distress, come to me, and I'll strive to relieve you." He used to say, "I want nothing but as much as will keep a pair of horses and a servant."†

He was fond of a good horse, and generally had the best saddle horses that could be got, though he was remarkably awkward on horseback.

* It must, however, be owned, in justice to the people of that country, that they seem at present very much improved in every particular.

† Jonas Good, the famous man, already mentioned, quitted his service on obtaining a farm at Pettigo, in which his widow and children now live; he himself having died some years ago.

For he turned out his toes, and took no hold with his knees, but balanced himself in the stirrups, like a man on slack-wire; so that when the horse began to trot, he jogged up and down like a taylor. A lady, who was riding along with him one day, near Pettigo, observed to him, that he turned out his toes too much, "O yes," he said, "my education was inverted, for I was taught to ride by a dancing-master, and to dance by a riding-master." Horace himself informs us very candidly, that he rode awkwardly on his mule.

It has been mentioned, that old Mr. Leslie, his father, as he called him, who died while he had Pettigo, recommended his grandchildren to him on his death-bed. He assured him he would be a father to them, and proved himself to be so, for, among his other virtues, he possessed, in a high degree, gratitude and veracity. A lady once asked him, if he had, as reported, kept the Rev. Alexander Leslie, a grandson of this clergyman, while a school-boy, at Monaghan school? He acknowledged to her he had partly. When Mr. Leslie's sister was left a widow with a large family, he sent her fifty pounds.

Once he gave thirty pounds as an apprentice fee with a young man who was no way connected with him, except by being his godson.

As the living of Devenish lay near Enniskillen, he boarded and lodged in that town, with his physician and friend Dr. Scott; where he had an

agreeable and rational society, which must have been doubly pleasing to him, after nine years exile in the desert wilds of Pettigo. The Doctor and he used to sit up pretty late in the winter nights playing piquet, of which he was very fond; but he seldom played higher than a farthing a game.

The whole living was then divided in two parts, placed at some mile's distance from each other. The part that lay to the North of Lough-Ern was called Monea, that to the South of it Trory*. In the former was the parish church, and in the latter a chapel of ease. He usually preached in the chapel of ease, as it was only two miles distant from Enniskillen, and kept a curate in the parish church. However, he frequently changed places with his curate, extending his care over the people in every part of his parish. In both churches there was a large congregation, as is the case over the whole county of Fermanagh, where the church-of-England-men exceed the presbyterians in the proportion of at least three to one. This is very unusual in the North of Ireland, where presbyterians of every species so much abound. In these churches Mr. Skelton had the sacrament administered once a month; a regulation he thought fit to make on account of the number of hearers.

His endeavours to instruct his people both in public and private were equally strenuous now as

* This part of the living is now made a perpetual cure.

before. The children he catechised, as usual, in the proof-catechism, and lectured on these occasions. The grown up people he also examined in the church. At Trory he had a great many quality, whom he examined as well as the rest, but he was plaguily afraid they should miss any thing, for he wished to set them up as examples for the others to imitate. On this account he asked them always the easiest questions imaginable; yet they often did not hit on the right answers. When he was going to examine one of these he used to say to the rest of the people, "I only ask this gentleman a question to show you I make no distinction, for I am sure he is very well acquainted with his duty." One day he asked a man of fortune in his church how many commandments there were? and he answered *nine*: on which it was observed, that he forgot the seventh, *thou shalt not commit adultery*, as he was apt to stray from the wife.

The situation of his parish, which adjoined Lough Ern, made his attention to the morals of his people more requisite. In the Lough, it is well known, there are near four hundred little islands. These swarmed at that time with private stills, which, as being out of the reach of the revenue officers, made the whiskey too plenty, and in proportion the morals of the people depraved. It therefore required all his attention to counteract the corrupt influence of the place. Government

have now, I am told, appointed a barge with officers and men to seize on these private stills, that are so injurious to good morals.

In 1763, Mr. Skelton, with the rest of the established clergy, was forced to make his escape to Dublin from the Oak-boys, who were then persecuting the church; all his virtues not being able to secure him from those enemies to religion. He thought it prudent to take a circular way, that he might thus elude the search of the villains who pursued him; and staid in Dublin till he could return to his parish with safety.

At that time, I think, he found at the Bishop of Clogher's, to whom he paid a visit, a grave clergyman, an author, who boasted to him, that he had written a large English grammar with one pen; which he thought a great feat; and probably he had more merit in doing it, than in writing the book. He then said, that he lately intended to write a translation of Suetonius, but was gravelled in the very first sentence, and forced to desist. The literary world has reason to lament the loss.

While Mr. Skelton was in Dublin, the Oak-boys seized on Arthur Johnston Esq. of Enniskillen, a gentleman of a stiff temper, worth five hundred a year. They then ordered him to swear to be true to their cause, and so on; but he refused obstinately; on which they put a rope about his neck, and were on the point of hanging him, when one Simpson, a supernumerary gauger, who

afterwards got a commission in the army, bursting in on them with a pistol, rescued him out of their hands. Skelton, on his return, met Mr. Johnston in the streets of Enniskillen, and putting his hand in his pocket, took out a shilling, and gave it to him, saying, "here, take this, I gave a shilling to see a camel in Dublin, but an honest man is a greater wonder in the county of Fermanagh."

To a gentleman, who told him once he expected to represent that county in parliament, he said, "aye, they are all a parcel of rascals, and a rascal is the fittest to represent them." These expressions of resentment proceeded from a temporary dislike, probably occasioned by his imagining them somewhat favourable to the Oak-boys. Yet if I could judge by my own little experience of them, I should give them a very different character.

A Mr. C. of the same county invited him to spend a fortnight at his house; but when he was there a day or two, his servant came and told him, he could get no oats for the horses. This he thought a hint to him, that his company could be dispensed with; so he hastened to set off immediately. When he was just going away Mr. C. said to him, "I am surprised you would leave me so soon, after promising to stay a fortnight with me." "Sir," he replied, "you have fed myself, but you starved my horses." He thus freely spoke his mind.

No hopes of private advantage could prevail on him to vary a tittle from the truth. Having a fine mare at Enniskillen, which happened once to fall under him, he resolved to part with her, and on a fair day in that town, sent her out with a servant to sell her, and soon followed himself accompanied by Dr. Scott, who told me the anecdote, to set off the mare. When any one who wished to buy her, asked him, "what sort of a mare is this?" he answered, "she is a very bad mare, she fell under me;" then he told all her faults, and many more imaginary ones. The people, of consequence, when he gave her so bad a character, went off without offering any thing. At last a Mr. Galbraith of Omagh, who came up to him, and heard the same bad account of her, said to him, "well what will you take for her with all her faults?" Why, I don't doubt but she may be worth eight guineas for drawing the car, but she is not fit to ride." "Tis a bargain," said the other, and gave him the money immediately. But in a week after he sold the same mare for twenty six pound. This shows Mr. Skelton was but a bad jockey, as these gentry make it a rule not to be so scrupulous in telling all the faults of the horses they wish to sell. It is a maxim now a days, I understand, that a man may be honest in every thing else, but a rogue about horses. By these and many other instances, it appears, that Mr. Skelton was void of hypocrisy, a quality

which has often helped to insinuate ecclesiastics into favour.

A gentleman of great consequence near Enniskillen, who often invited him to his house, but was still disappointed of seeing him there, at last pressed to know his reason for it; "to be plain with you, Sir," he answered, "you're too great a man for me to be acquainted with."

Being informed one evening while he was in Dr. Scott's, that a methodist preacher was declaiming in the streets with the usual violence, he kindly invited the preacher to drink tea with him after preaching. The man came accompanied by all his followers, who pushed after him into the parlour, to hear Mr. Skelton and him arguing. "What commission, Sir," said Skelton, "have you to preach the gospel?" "A commission from above;" replied the preacher. "By whom were you ordained?" "By the spirit," he answered. "Well Sir, suppose you have got the spirit, as you say, it is still necessary you should be ordained by the laying on of hands, before you attempt to preach; for you read in the Acts of the Apostles, *the Holy Ghost said, separate me Barnabas and Paul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.* These, it is allowed, had already got the spirit; but they were not permitted to go abroad to preach, till they were first ordained by the laying on of hands. Hence your preaching,

without being ordained, is contrary to the practice of the apostles." The man being confounded by this objection made his escape as fast as possible.

When he was arguing again with a methodist preacher, he said to him, "Do you advise Presbyterians to go to Meeting, and Church-People to go to Church?" "Yes." "Well then," said he, "your religion is not the same as St. Paul's, for he says, *be ye all of one mind one with another.*"

Once a year he went to Lisburn to see his relations, when he generally took with him sixty guineas, which he divided among them. In Derriaghy, there is a handsome rural place called the Big Glen, near Collin mountain, which has been so often celebrated in poetry, where he used every summer to give his friends a treat on the grass, who spent one day with him in innocent relaxation.

Returning once from Lisburn with his hat tied over his face he met with his tithe-farmer near Enniskillen, and lifting up the brim of his hat, he saw him, and said, "Is this you, George Irwin?" "Yes," replied George. "Can you give me a guinea?" "I can." "Can you give me a shilling?" "I can." "O then," he said, "I'm as rich as a Jew, I'm as rich as a Jew."

Derriaghy, the place of his birth, belongs, it is well known, to the Earl of H. Before that nobleman obtained the government of this kingdom, he used frequently to say, as Mr. Skelton told me, that it was a shame for the Lord Lieutenants of

Ireland not to make Skelton a Bishop. It was reasonable then to suppose, that these sentiments should operate with his Lordship, if an opportunity offered of putting them in practice. Consequently, when he came over to us Lord Lieutenant in the year 1765, Skelton probably expected to be raised by him to that high office, for which, from his virtues and abilities, he was so eminently qualified. But he was disappointed, we know, in his hopes, if he had any.

On former occasions, when his Lordship paid a visit to Ireland he used to send for Mr. Skelton, but, I believe, neglected to do it then. However, soon after his arrival, he passed a few days with him at Lord Loftus's in the county of Fermanagh, where his Excellency spent some time shooting woodcocks. Skelton then remarked to him, that he was happy to find a Lord Lieutenant that could govern the kingdom and shoot woodcocks. On this occasion, he asked him what sort of a living he had? "A very good living, a very good living, please your Excellency, much better than I deserve." Few clergymen would return such an answer to such a question from a Lord Lieutenant; for the most of them think they have not got nearly equal to their merits.

In the disposal of his ecclesiastic preferments, his Excellency took no notice of Mr. Skelton, which might be owing to his declaring himself content with his condition; for he might suppose,

there was no occasion to heap favours on a man, who did not seem to desire them ; especially, when so many were gaping to snatch at them. However, Mr. Skelton mentioned to me another reason for the neglect he then met with, which I am forced to omit, lest I should give offence to persons of eminence, which one in my station should carefully avoid. In Justice, however, to Lord H. I must own, that he gave his brother Richard's son a commission in the army at his request. The young man was soon obliged to go out on half-pay, but when he was preparing to join the regiment again, he took a fever and died.

His brother Richard had a daughter who was married to one Magee, but in some time she parted from her husband, who appears not to have been without his faults. Mr. Skelton laid down rules for his niece to observe with respect to her husband, but she would not observe them. He sent her ten guineas, in 1780, on condition she would go and live with him, but she refused. He then ordered the money to be given to one of his relations at Dundalk. When any of his poor relations came to see him, he told them freely, they wanted to get something from him.

His charities, while he continued at Devenish, were equally extraordinary as before. They were even, if possible, more extensive, in proportion to the increase of his living. He was the same attentive friend to the poor, the same reliever of

their distress and asswager of their pain. But a particular account of these would be too similar to that I have already given. It is necessary only to observe, that his memory is there also held in high esteem.

In 1766*, the Bishop of Clogher promoted him again to the living of Fintona in the county of Tyrone worth at least a hundred a year more than that of Devenish. Neither Mr. Skelton, nor any one for him, asked the Bishop for this or the other living ; so that a regard for his merit was the sole principle that induced his Lordship to bestow these benefices successively upon him. Such a Bishop was indeed an honour to the station he filled, and a blessing to the clergy who had the good fortune to be under him.

When Mr. Skelton visited his Lordship on his promotion, he said to him, "My Lord, I return you thanks for your kindness to me, and for putting so worthy a person in my room ; but I know, the chief pleasure you enjoy is in being able to do good." "I am glad, Skelton," said the

* In his Senilia he says he was at Fintona about 1765, but I was assured there, that he came to it in 1766. In his fifth volume he informs us that he got the hurt at the long-bullets when he was twenty one years of age ; but in his Senilia he says he got it when he was twenty. In his sixth volume he tells us, his works were published in 1777, but the works themselves inform us, they were published in 1770. Hence it appears, that through inadvertence, or defect of memory, he was liable to mistakes with respect to time and dates.

Bishop, "I have done what is agreeable to you." "But, my Lord," he continued, "you are only a puppet in the hands of God Almighty. God sent one of the royal family to the university in England, where you were a professor, that you might please him, and be raised high in the church. Then God Almighty, using him as an instrument, sent you over to Ireland, and made you Bishop of Ferns, and at length raised you to the see of Clogher, where you have great power and many livings to bestow, and a horrible account you must give hereafter of the manner you dispose of them. Thus God sent you over to us to do good, and to promote worthy men. He sent you also my Lord, to promote me, who, I hope, will not shame you before him and the world. You see now, my Lord, you are only a puppet in the hands of God Almighty." "You're right Skelton, you're right Skelton," replied the good Bishop.

When he got the living of Fintona he was just fifty nine years of age. "God Almighty," he used to say, "was very kind to me: when I began to advance in years and stood in need of a Horse and Servant, he gave me a living. Then he gave me two livings one after another, each of which was at least worth a hundred a year more than the preceding. I have therefore been rewarded by him, even in this world, far above my deserts." Such was his humility.

Fintona is a market-town in the County of

Tyrone, five miles distant from Omagh. The proper name of the parish is Donacavey, but as Fintona is the market-town, the parish by custom, as before observed of Pettigo, assumes that name. It is six miles square, and though of a coarse soil was even then tolerably well cultivated. It also has two hundred acres of glebe ; seventy of which lie near the town, but the rest is mountainous, and consequently of little value. A third part of the parish is tithe-free, which made the living, though so large, and with such a glebe, worth scarce five hundred a year. However, he received but four hundred neat, as the curate's salary, which was at least sixty pounds, and the expense of collecting tithe, consumed the other hundred. Possibly he could have made more of it, had he been rigid in requiring his dues. There is a market in Fintona every Friday, and also some stated fairs in the year, when they usually have violent quarrels. The twenty second of June is a remarkably quarrelling fair. But they were then even more furious quarrellers than at present, as the private stills were more numerous, and of course the people more disorderly. In this town he at first boarded and lodged with one Buchannan.

Upon entering on the care of this parish he perceived, that he had but few hearers, the most of the people being Roman Catholics and Presbyterians. In the town of Fintona in particular they were almost all Presbyterians, but in a short

time he brought over nearly the whole of these to the established church; which was no easy task, considering the firmness with which they usually adhere to their opinions of nonconformity.

A clergyman, with whom he lodged a while, assured me he told him, that when he found, on first coming to one of his parishes, that his protestant parishioners were mostly dissenters, he used the following stratagem to entice them to come to church. Having invited their minister to dine with him, he asked his leave to preach in his meeting-house on the next Sunday, though he owned he could not with safety allow him to preach in his church. The man gave his consent; but his people were so pleased with Mr. Skelton, that the greater number of them quit their own teacher, and came afterwards to hear him. He then sent for him and asked him how much he lost by the desertion of his hearers? He told him forty pounds a year; on which he settled that sum annually on him, and paid it out of his own pocket.

His practice of Physic at Fintona was at least equally expensive to him; for his bestowing medicines on the poor, and prescribing to the people gratis, as at Pettigo, made Dr. Gormly the physician of the place complain, that by his means he lost a great part of his business; which caused him also to settle forty pounds a year on him. In both these instances he not only took on him the

toil of doing good, but also voluntarily paid for doing it.

At Fintona he made converts of a few Roman Catholics, as also at all his other parishes. At Devenish in particular, one Ann Develin of that persuasion being converted by hearing his awful lectures to a sick woman on her death-bed, renounced the Popish Religion ; which caused her to suffer hard usage from her own family, who vainly strove by all harsh means to bring her back to popery.

About the time he was advanced to his last preferment, he received a letter from the present Earl of Bristol, before he got his Bishoprick, informing him, that as he expected soon to be raised to a station of some eminence in the Irish church, he hoped then to be able to prove the high opinion he entertained for the Author of Deism Revealed. Accordingly, in 1767, upon his obtaining the Bishoprick of Cloyne, his Lordship sent him another letter to this effect, that having some time before made a sort of an engagement with him, he begged leave now to fulfil it, and therefore requested him to come up to Dublin and preach his consecration sermon, assuring him that, upon his compliance, he would promote him in the church as high as he was able. Skelton in his answer informed his Lordship, he would comply with his request, though he was content with the living he had ; and if he would consent to go to

the diocess of Cloyne, it would be only to be nearer the sun, and nearer his Lordship. He then prepared a Sermon for the occasion ; but when the day approached, finding himself somewhat unwell, and the weather very cold, he thought he could not with safety go to Dublin, and of course the Bishop was disappointed. However, he sent his Lordship the sermon, who, though astonished at the ability it displayed, was still offended with Mr. Skelton, as he imagined his excuse for his absence was not sufficient. Upon this he informed him by letter, that the chain of their friendship was broke in two ; to which Mr. Skelton replied, that if it were broken, it was of his Lordship's own forging not of his. Yet the Bishop, after his promotion to the see of Derry, came to Fintona to pay him a visit when he happened to be abroad, and desired a young gentleman who was in his lodgings to inform him, that he had come fifteen miles out of his road to see him. Of this visit Mr. Skelton, it seems, took no notice. It is a pity that the disappointment of the sermon produced such a disagreement between them, for otherwise his Lordship, in all probability, would have promoted him highly in his diocess, as, it is well known, he is a liberal encourager of literature.

His brother John of Dundalk died this year. I have heard it mentioned to his credit, that he would not, like some others, use his influence over the landlord to take fields from the poor people

to suit his own convenience. His brother Thomas of Newry died some time before ; for whom he had such an affection that he wore ever after, as mourning for him, a blue coat with black cuffs.

When he obtained the living of Fintona, he seemed to have arrived at the height of his wishes. He had no ambitious notions ; he wished to do good here, in hopes of getting to heaven hereafter. In no human breast was there ever a more settled contempt for the vain pomp of all sublunary things. A gentleman mentioned him once with respect to Lord Townshend, during his lieutenancy, adding, that he was content with what he had ; on which his Excellency observed, that he must be a very extraordinary man, and he would be glad to be acquainted with him ; for he never knew any one in all his life content with what he had. Another gentleman of consequence, intimately acquainted with this nobleman, offered to introduce him to his Excellency, but he refused, assuring him, he did not wish for any higher preferment in the church. Besides, he knew he was not qualified to pay that humble attendance at court, requisite to gain the favour of a great man in power.

His people at Fintona being but little acquainted with religion, though well accustomed to Whiskey and quarrelling, he found it necessary, first to visit every house in his parish, and then collect to a particular place the people of each town-land, that he might instruct them more conveniently. When

he had thus gone round them himself, he afterwards called to his assistance blind Carshore of Pettigo, who spent the whole winter among them teaching them religion, for which he was paid by him. In summer he catechised the children in church as usual, bestowing on them Bibles, or Week's-Preparations, according to their answering, or the distance they came, and accompanied his examination with improving lectures on the catechism, introducing in these some of the most notorious bad deeds done in the parish the week before. Thus he strove to shame them out of their vices, and also out of their ignorance, by publicly examining, as usual, the grown-up people in the church.

One Sunday, some time after he came to Fintona, when he was examining them in the church, he came up to a woman, and asked her how many Commandments there were? She answered, *seven*. He told her, there were ten, and asked her what was the first? This was too hard for her, and when she was stammering about it, one John Patterson, a Taylor, behind her, whispered to her, *Thou shalt have no other Gods but me*. "Do you hear, Sir," quoth she, "what Jonny Patterson a Tailor body here says to me? he says, I shall have no other Gods but him: *Deel* in hell take such Gods." This is an instance of the ignorance of the people.

He was examining there again an old gentleman, called John Hamilton, who could not answer him

a word. When he found, he said nothing, he thought he was deaf, and said, "ah! poor man, he's deaf." "Oh! indeed I am," he replied.

Though his people had himself, his Curate, and blind Carshore to instruct them, they were still very far from being perfect; and therefore he thought it requisite to appoint, as an additional instructer, one Armstrong, a miller of Tonagh, near Fintona, whom he supposed to be a very sober discreet man. To him he gave the charge of his neighbours, to keep them in due order, telling him, he expected he would give a good account of them. Soon after this, he met Armstrong drunk in Fintona, on a market-day, and said, "Oh! Oh! Mr. Armstrong, is this the man I have trusted the care of my people to?" "Why, I am a better man than you are," he replied. "How can that be?" "I'll tell you: the people, you gave into my charge, I have all safe and sound; but there are you, the Priest, and your Curate, and you have let the Devil take a man from among the middle of you." "How so?" said Skelton. "Sure," he answered, "Dick Saggerton, you know, a day or two ago, cut his throat in the town with you, and the Devil has carried him off in spite of you all." This, it seems, was really the case.

The irregularity of his people required indeed every exertion. Their heads, it appears, were too often disordered, and their manners corrupted by Whiskey, which was too plenty by means of the

private stills, that are so destructive of good morals.

One day he met a carpenter drunk, who was repairing the church, and checked him for his drunkenness, and neglecting the business he was employed about; he then said, the people of Fintona were all beggars, yet they were still drinking. "Sir," replied the man, "Solomon gives us liberty to drink, for he says, *Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine to those that be of heavy hearts. Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more* *. You see then poor people should drink to keep up their spirits."

He saw a mill grinding malt for Whiskey on a Sunday, and in his lecture took notice of it, as usual, saying, "we have malt on this side, and malt on that side. Ah! my poor parishioners lose their souls by it; the distillers are the cause of this, who are hanging by the tongue in hell." "By * * he lies (one of them who was drunk in Church said to another one beside him) for you're not there, and I'm not there."

Another Sunday he carried off a parcel of boy's clothes who were stript playing ball.

In his own conduct indeed he always set an example of strict piety and morality. Beside his private prayers, which were at least twice a day, he had family prayers every evening, to which he

* Prov. 31. 6, 7.

summoned the people of the town by the ringing of a hand-bell.

His neighbours frequently resorted to his lodgings, being amused and instructed by his agreeable conversation. With some of them he used to play cards after dinner, to keep himself awake, for he was apt to slumber at that time, as is usual with some others.

Having a few of his parishioners with him one evening at his lodgings, he happened to fall asleep; and then, while one of them blowed his nose very violently with his handkerchief, another one pluckt the handkerchief smartly, so as to make the noise very shrill. This instantly wakened Mr. Skelton, who said, "what, you're blowing a trumpet in my room to insult me;" and then starting up, he said he would beat them, and turned them out of the room. However, he received them again into favour, on their humbly begging to be reconciled to him, for they did not wish to fall out with him, his company was so agreeable.

It may be supposed, that even before he got the living of Fintona, he had improved, as much as possible, his extraordinary talent for preaching. When he preached Charity Sermons in Dublin, as he often did, he always brought thither a crowded audience. It was remarked, that on these occasions he generally got more to the poor than any one else, and well might he enjoin charity to others, who set such a noble example of that

virtue in himself. His manner in the pulpit was unusually vehement, suitable to the warmth of his feelings. Some degree of vehemence in a preacher is absolutely requisite now a days, when mankind are so careless about religion; indeed, it requires no ordinary skill in one of these to make an audience listen to him for twenty minutes with tolerable attention. He never made use of spectacles in the pulpit, not even in his old age; in which he justly consulted the feelings of his audience; for surely it is disgusting to see a preacher mount the pulpit, and clap a pair of spectacles on his nose, to snivel out his dull lecture to his drowsy people. But when he turns up his eyes off the paper, and looks at us through the spectacle which we see glittering on his nose, his appearance for an orator is really burlesque. To avoid all this, Mr. Skelton first made his own sermons, so that he had the marrow of them already in his head, and next, he had them copied in a large fair hand, which a young man could read at three yards' distance. Consequently, in his very advanced age he could easily read them without spectacles. He generally hired a servant who could write a tolerable hand to copy at leisure-hours his Sermons and other writings, in which he always improved by practice. Surely our beneficed clergy could at least afford to do this; and then they would no longer contribute by their spectacles to set their congregations asleep;

to which indeed they are sufficiently inclined of themselves.

Being in Lisneskea Church one Sunday, where the Rector spoke in a low squeaking voice, he remarked to him after dinner, before some others, "Sir, you speak in company loud enough, but you squeak so in Church, that we can't know a word you say."

In Fintona church he took down the Pulpit, and in its place raised the Reading-Desk to such a height, as to serve both for Reading-Desk and Pulpit. This gave him more room for action, with which, as already mentioned, he always set off his Sermons.

In 1770, he published his works by subscription, in five volumes octavo, for the benefit of the Magdalen Charity. The first volume contains Deism Revealed, the second and third, the Sermons he published in England, the fourth, an additional volume of sermons never published before. To these four volumes he prefixed a dedication addressed to Lady Arabella Denny, the illustrious patroness of the charity above mentioned, dated Fintona, June 7, 1770. The fifth volume, which consists of Miscellanies, he dedicates to the Revd. Dr. Henry Clarke, who had some time been his tutor in the university. These five volumes were printed by William Watson of Capel-street, and obtained for the charity five hundred pounds.

The additional volume of Sermons he preferred

to the others, as his understanding was more mature when he wrote them. His Sermon on these words, *the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light*, I have always admired for its just observations on mankind.

In the fifth volume, there are a few pieces not published before, of which it may be necessary to take notice.

First; *Reasons for Inoculation*; in which he mentions, that, some time before he wrote this little piece, seven children, on an average, died each day of the Small Pox at Lisburn.

Second; *An Account of a Well or Pool* near Clonis in the county of Monaghan, famous for curing the jaundice. The cure he supposes not owing to the virtue of the waters, but to the mode of application.

Third; *Observations on a late Resignation.* It alludes to the conduct of the Revd. Mr. Robertson, late of the established church, a short account of whom may not be unnecessary. He had the benefice of Rathvilly, in the diocess of Leighlin and Ferns; but as he could not believe in the Trinity, resigned it through a scruple of conscience. On his resignation, he published his reasons entitled an *Enquiry* &c. which Mr. Skelton thought a book very agreeably written. He then wrote to Mr. Robertson requesting he would come and spend the remainder of his life with him, and take part of what he had; if not, he offered him

a large share of his income to support him. In his letter to him he said, "we should often argue, but never dispute, if we could not concur in one creed, we should at least coalesce in one heart." Such were his proposals to a man whose religious opinions differed so widely from his. But Mr. Robertson nobly refused, and preferred retiring to a country part of England, where he kept a school for his bread. They were intimate ever after, and continued a regular correspondence with each other. When he sent his grandson afterwards to our university, he committed him chiefly to the care of Mr. Skelton, who would not allow him, on urgent occasions, to be in want of money. This was a man that, without any pompous display of principle, quietly resigned a good living for conscience sake. Skelton assured me that Mr. Lindsey, who made such a parade about his honesty, was not influenced by motives as pure as his, as the society which he established in London brought him more yearly than the vicarage he resigned.

Fourth ; *A Dream.* This is intended to expose the folly of fashion. In imagination it is not deficient ; but it is too long, and its style stiff and affected. It requires no ordinary skill to make fiction appear pleasant.

Fifth ; *Hilema.* By this he means a copse, or shrubbery. It consists of a variety of short observations, some of which, if written in an easy

style, would be agreeable. There are also in it a few anecdotes well worth reading.

His good friend the Bishop of Clogher coming to visit him at Fintona this year, arrived at his lodgings on a Sunday morning, when he had his hat on in his room, and was just ready to go to church. The Bishop, it was observed, on entering, took off his hat, but he kept his on. Yet no one had a higher respect than he for his worthy patron, though he might not strictly observe every little ceremony.

At Fintona, this year, there were some remarkable events. One or two people killed themselves; others were murdered; one man in particular was murdered in the street opposite to his window; which had such an effect on him, that he instantly made his escape from the place in dread of his life, imagining, if he staid, that he also should be murdered. He durst not venture back again for three months, it was so long before he could shake off his apprehension.

The county of Tyrone, he said, was remarkable for many murders, the perpetrators of which generally escaped unpunished. However, it has at last been thought expedient to punish them. In April 1788, I saw three of their heads fixed on Omagh Jail for a barbarous murder lately committed.

It is to be hoped, for the honour of humanity, that Mr. Skelton was in no real danger of his life

at Fintona; for they must have been worse than savages, had they attempted to injure a man, who was constantly doing good among them. Even in plentiful times he gave nearly the half of his income to the poor; or should he on an odd year happen not to give so much, he only reserved his money to be more liberal to them at a season of scarcity. At the division of the poor's money every Easter, he always joined to the whole collection twenty or thirty pounds of his own. Besides, he very often put a guinea in the poor-box, and seldom less than a crown. He also gave money to buy flax-seed to those who stood in need of it. Indeed he was constantly dividing his charities, either publicly or privately, among the necessitous. Yet in the distribution of these, he was scarce ever imposed on by improper objects, he examined so strictly into the condition of those he relieved. To the strolling beggars he was not, I must own, very liberal, for he suspected the most of them to be impostors. In one of his pieces he says, "of all nuisances and grievances incident to poor Ireland, strolling beggars are the worst."

His strict and rigid œconomy enabled him to give so much away. His curate, who lodged many years in the same house with him, told me, he often saw him sitting up in his bed in the morning mending his breeches. He had a trash-bag, as they call it, in which he kept needles,

thread, and such like articles, to put a few stitches, if necessary, in his clothes.

Yet he was obliged at last, on account of his age and infirmities, to be at the expense of buying a chaise, which, as he got it, not for show, but convenience, was very plain. He used to say he would put asses to his chaise, if he could get any, that he might, in this at least, bear some resemblance to his great master.

About 1773, there was a dearth in that part of Ireland, at which time, as usual, he kept his poor alive by his own money and the assistance he got from others. The land about Fintona was tolerably fertile, but cadgers bought up the oatmeal, and carried it off to the barren parts of the county of Derry and Antrim, which made the dearth be felt more severely at Fintona. It was therefore requisite at that time to bring meal thither from other places; but this was attended with some difficulty, as the people of the adjacent parishes, who were in a manner starving, strove to take the meal by force from the carmen. Of consequence, the people of Fintona found it necessary to arm themselves, and go in a body to meet the carmen, and conduct them to the town.

About this time, he left Buchannan's, and went to board and lodge with James West a shopkeeper, in whose house Mr. Eccles, the squire of his parish lodged along with him a while, when they lived very agreeably together, as Mr. Eccles,

who is a gentleman of real piety, was fond of a religious conversation. He was indeed so remarkable for this, that Mr. Skelton used often to say, he had too much religion for a gentleman. However, we need not be apprehensive that others of his station will catch the infection.

Mr. Eccles had a brother a clergyman, the Revd. Charles Stewart Eccles, who offered to preach in Fintona church, but Mr. Skelton refused him leave, as he suspected him to be a methodist; and seemingly with good reason, for he preached publicly in the conventicles of those religionists. However, they had a friendly communication at Mr. Skelton's lodgings, and staid in a room together a whole week, all which time he spent examining into Mr. Charles Eccles principles, and was at length convinced, that, strictly speaking, he was not a methodist. Of consequence, he then allowed him to preach in his church. Two parts out of three of the whole parish belong to Mr. Eccles, yet he would not allow his brother to preach in his church, till he was convinced, he was not tinctured with false principles.

Mr. Eccles told me, that his brother had been in Georgia, where he was head of the college of Savanna. While he was there, he and another clergyman went among the Indians to convert them to christianity; but their preaching was unhappily not successful. In one town, in particular, the savages chased them away with stones;

on which they *shook the dust off their feet as a judgment against them.* But in a day or two after they heard, (strange to tell!) that another body of Indians came on them, and destroyed the town, and put them all to death. This indeed was a signal event.

This clergyman met with his death (in 1780) in the following manner. While he was studying a Sermon near the banks of a river in England, he saw a boy just drowning in the river; upon this, he ran to it, and leaping in to save him, was drowned in striving to preserve his life.

It appears, Mr. Skelton was not over fond of the methodists. A few years after he came to Fintona, some of his people began to adopt their religious notions. A man, who had lately turned methodist, coming somewhat late into church on a Sunday, while he was walking up the aisle, was thus addressed by Skelton, "I suppose, Sir, you have not come to hear me, till you had dismissed your own congregation; but you do not come here to be instructed; it is only to make your remarks." At that time he preached against the methodists on this text, *by their fruits you shall know them.*

One Browne, a methodist preacher, rebuked him at Fintona for playing cards. He pleaded as an excuse for himself, that he only played for a farthing a game; but the man still insisted it was a heinous sin. When the methodists told him,

they could live without sin, (a doctrine peculiar to their sect) he said to them, "ah, you are very different from me, for I am sinning every hour." *He that exalteth himself shall be abased, but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*

In his private conversation with Mr. Eccles, he remarked, that if men preached the gospel now with the same dispositions as the Apostles, miracles would follow. Again he said to him, "between you and me, I'll pawn my salvation on the Truth of the Trinity." He once declared to me, that he would resign his living, if the Athanasian Creed were removed from the prayer-book; and I am sure he would have done so. Few, I suppose, of the established clergy were so sincerely attached to it.

It has been mentioned, that he always kept a curate at Fintona. Mr. Hawkshaw's son was curate to him a short while, until he got a living. About 1773, Mr. Auchinleck became his curate, and still continues there. Upon his getting the cure, he gave him grass for his horse in the glebe, and desired him to lodge with him in James West's, when he told him, he might give twenty pounds a year for his diet and lodging, &c. and he would pay the rest he should be charged out of his own pocket. But this gentleman imagined, Mr. Skelton would have to pay too much, and therefore declined accepting for some time of his kind offer, until he made, what he thought, a

more reasonable agreement with Mr. West. He then went to lodge in the same house with Mr. Skelton, who insisted on giving him share of his own wine after dinner, and also on paying for whatever company Mr. Auchinleck chose to invite to dine with him. He considered, he said, all these as his own guests, and therefore would pay for them. For the cure he gave him sixty pounds a year, while he resided at Fintona, and seventy afterwards. He also allowed him advantages from the management of his tithe, and set him a part of the glebe at a low rent when he removed to Dublin.

Being often, on a vacancy, appointed sequestrator to a living, he always raised the curate's salary from forty to fifty pounds. This he did at Rossery, where he was sequestrator, when he had Devenish.

To the poor curates indeed he was always a sincere friend, as also to all others, whose condition made them stand in need of his assistance. While he had Fintona, he went once to recommend to a certain eminent Prelate an old Curate who was remarkable for his morals, learning, and abilities. After some conversation, he told his Grace he had come to him on business. "What business?" his Grace quickly replied. "I am come," he answered, "to recommend to your Grace, Mr. Johnston, an old curate of great merit in your diocess, who will soon die, and its a shame he should

die a curate. I beg therefore you may give him a small living." "He is an odd sort of a man," his Grace said, and then gave him a refusal. On which Mr. Skelton spoke to him thus, "I agree with your Grace, he is a very odd sort of a man, for he has more learning, and knows better how to apply it than the whole diocess of * * *."

Some dignified clergy at the Bishop of Clogher's were remarking one day before dinner, that Skelton himself was an odd sort of a man, mentioning the oddity of his dress, and the like. "Aye, aye," observed the old Bishop, "Mr. Skelton may wear a rusty gown, and a brown wig, but he is such a jewel, that we should overlook his little peculiarities."

The Bishop of Clogher wrote him once a letter to Fintona, to inform him, that the same eminent Prelate, just now mentioned, would, be at his house on such a day, and said, he expected he would come and wait on him. Immediately he returned an answer to this effect, "that if his Lordship desired him to come to him on the most frivolous occasion, he would obey ; but as for the other (naming him) he was out of his books, and he would not turn his heel where his toe was to pay him a compliment." Of this illustrious person he also remarked, that he was very careful to build churches, but did not care what sort of clergymen he put in them.

At Drogheda, he was told once, that the same eminent Prelate would be there the next day. Upon which he hastened immediately out of the town, declaring he would not see him or speak to him, as he neglected his old curates. In the recital of these anecdotes I have observed as much delicacy as in my power, but it is not, I think, the duty of a biographer to conceal the truth.

In 1771, he went to live, during the winter, with his nephew Dr. Skelton in Drogheda, and continued to stay there in winters, till about 1774, when he parted from him in a huff, on an imaginary insult. He had written a letter to the Revd. Dr. King in Dublin, inviting him and his two sisters to spend some time with him in Drogheda. This letter lying with an other on his table, sealed, but not directed, he by mistake directed the wrong letter to Dr. King, and his to the other person. When he did not get an answer from the Doctor at the usual time, he imagined, that his nephew, by his wife's directions, had detained the letter, and having, on this account, treated him and Mrs. Skelton, a lady of great gentleness and goodness, somewhat roughly, he hastened away from the house; nor was he afterwards, which is very odd, sufficiently reconciled to his nephew, though he found out the mistake.

To this mistake indeed he was sometimes subject. Dr. Scott told me, he received a letter

from him at Enniskillen from Dublin, which was intended for the Revd. Mr. English in the county of Armagh, who of course got his letter.

His portmanteau was stolen from him once at an inn in Drogheda, in which he had some Sermons, and other curious articles he valued very much. But the villains, I dare say, expected something more *substantial* in it than Sermons, or the like; otherwise, they would not so eagerly have snatched it away, for such fellows are easy about divinity.

The air of Fintona being now too keen for him in winter, he was at that season forced to go to a place more suitable to his constitution. In 1775, he went to lodge in Dublin with William Watson, the Bookseller, where he staid two or three winters. As yet he returned to Fintona before Easter Sunday, when he began his lectures on the catechism, which continued sixteen weeks.

Even in his old age he preserved some remains of his juvenile strength. Two fellows were boxing in an inn at Fintona, and he happened to see them; on which he ran in between them, to part them, which he accomplished with difficulty; this vexed him, and made him say, "O, if I were as strong as when I was young, I could easily master you both." When he got them asunder, he held them at arm's length, and said, "now you dogs spit your venom at each other."

He was always angry at any one who showed

himself cowardly, and once gave a woman half a crown for beating a man who strove to take a child from her.

While he lodged with William Watson, he preached a Sermon at St. Andrew's on Friday December 13, 1776, being the day appointed for a general fast and humiliation. Some time before, the Rector of that parish waiting on him requested him to preach on the ensuing fast; he pleaded his age and infirmities as his excuse, but desired the Rector to block out a Sermon himself, and he would correct it. Accordingly, a few days before the day appointed, he brought him the Sermon which he had made to have it corrected by him. But on examining it, he found it would be easier for him, as he told me, to make a new Sermon of his own, than to correct his nonsense, and therefore bade him take his Sermon home with him, and he would preach himself. His appearance on that day was suitable to the occasion. His wig was quite brown, it had not even the colour of powder in it; his gown was old and rusty, his face furrowed with wrinkles, and venerable by age; his person tall, though somewhat bent by years. In fact he bore a resemblance to one in mourning commissioned to remind the world of the judgments of God brought on them for their sins. In the pulpit, old as he was, he displayed his usual vehemence; he spoke with abhorrence of the corruptions and infidelity of the age; he

seemed to retain his wonted eloquence, and had an astonishing effect upon his hearers.

After service, Mr. Skelton, the Rector of the parish, and some more clergymen were sitting in the vestry, when the Rector, who wore a very fine powdered wig, said to him, by way of compliment, "I wish I could exchange heads with you;" "would you," said Skelton, "wig and all?" This raised a loud laugh.

The Sermon, at the desire of the parishioners, and many clergymen who were present, was published for the benefit of the charity schools of the parish. It is an animated composition, but displays evident marks of hurry.

The regular series of events conducts me to another conspicuous period of his life. At Fintona there was no trade or manufacture but that of yarn, from the sale of which, and of some oatmeal after a plentiful harvest they derived the little money they had. Their mode of subsistence was therefore very precarious, of which the poor in that place were made too sensible about 1778, when they were in a very distressed state. The yarn for a year before had been remarkably cheap, and the provisions for three years constantly rising in price. Hence he perceived a famine must ensue, and was anxious to provide against this calamity. But he was scarce ever so ill prepared for it as then, for with difficulty he had scraped up, on account of the general distress, even a small part of his

parochial income ; all of which, except what barely afforded him subsistence, he had already given away to the poor, their necessities were so urgent. When his money was all gone, he still saw their wants and the price of provisions increasing daily to an alarming degree. This forced him, about the beginning of spring, in compassion to their unhappy state, to borrow sixty four pounds to buy oatmeal for them ; which sum, being sent to Drogheda for that purpose, produced but four tun of meal including the expense of carriage ; a supply that was sufficient for some months to relieve those poor that stood most in need of it. But in time this charitable donation began to fail, while the necessities and the number of the indigent were daily increasing. He was then obliged, as the last resource, to write a circular letter setting forth their distresses, a copy of which he sent to each of those gentlemen who had landed property in the parish. Of this letter I obtained a copy at Fintona, and thus got some satisfactory intelligence respecting the dearth. He tells them of the afflictions of the poor, by the cheapness of the yarn, and the growing price of provisions, which had now produced a famine ; "that this famine, which was in a manner general through Europe, was attended in his parish by two epidemic distempers, the small-pox, and a purple fever, that raged with great violence ; that from one or other of these scarce a family was free ; so that in many houses,

out of seven or eight inhabitants, there was not one able to attend the rest, or to search the fields, or ditches, for sorrel and nettles, to relieve a perishing parent or child ; that some months before he had borrowed sixty four pounds to buy meal for them, all of which was almost expended now, though the dearth had not as yet arrived at its height ; that he had no other prospect but of a broken heart, nor his numerous poor any hope of redress but in death, unless the gentlemen who had estates in the parish would lend their aid ; that the tenants on his glebe, and his tithe-farmers owed him more than would be sufficient to preserve his poor, but should he attempt to force payment, he would do it in vain, or increase, instead of mitigating the calamity."

This letter had the desired effect. To each of the gentlemen he appointed their quota, in proportion to their quantity of land in the parish. The portion assigned Sir George Saville, who had two hundred a year in it, was 2*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.* ; which sum he thought so moderate that he ordered his agent to give it annually to the poor of Fintona during his life. Mr. Eccles, his squire, and Miss Ecklin of Stephen's Green gave the most.

A great part of this money he laid out immediately on oatmeal, which was bought in Drogheda, and conveyed by carmen to Fintona in certain quantities as necessary. On Friday, which was the market-day, he appointed to divide it among

the poor. Part of it he intended to give away, and part to sell at a lower rate. The former was placed in the parlour of his own lodgings ; the latter in the street. On the first day of the division, having dressed himself in his gown and band, he asked Mr. Eccles, who was present, if he had a fine suit of clothes, who told him he had, and put on a suit of green and gold. Thus equipt they both walked out into the street, when the poor, anxious for food, gathered about them in crowds. Mr. Skelton then spoke to them thus ; "My good people, don't despair ; after all the meal we bought, we have still money remaining. You see Mr. Eccles here ready to help you ; the rest of the gentlemen of property have also contributed, and I your minister, as usual, will assist you. Those that have money will get meal for three pence a peck lower than the market price, and those that have no money will get it for nothing ; but the poor that have no money must be served first."

During that summer, from May till September, he distributed gratis among his indigent parishioners an hundred and twenty five pecks of meal every week. In this account the meal sold at a low rate, which was far more, is not included. For that time there were on the poor's list from an hundred and sixty to two hundred, all of whom used to assemble on the market-day in the street opposite his parlour window. When he was ready to divide the meal, he put his head out of the window, and

shouted to them, "come all of you and get your shares." Then each of them was handed his share out of the window.

A decent-looking woman, he told me, came to him then one day to his lodgings, and falling down on her knees to him declared she and her family were starving; but she was ashamed to take meal with the rest, having never been accustomed to ask charity before. Moved by her tender tale, he relieved her privately, and kept her alive.

One poor man a Roman Catholic, to whom he offered meal, refused to take any of it, saying he had a *lock* of potatoes at home which would keep him from starving, and bade him give the meal to those who had more need for it. It is rare to meet with such an instance of self-denial even among those who pretend to finer feelings than this poor illiterate man.

The meal being once all spent before a fresh supply arrived from Drogheda, Mr. Skelton was then just sitting down to his breakfast on a Friday morning, when he asked the people he lodged with, if the meal had come from Drogheda for the poor? They answered, "no." "What, you thieves," said he, "will I feed myself while my poor are starving?" and sent off immediately before he would eat a morsel himself, and bought as much meal at a dear rate as was sufficient for that day's division.

Having some suspicions that both meal and

money should fail before the dearth would end, he starved himself, I may say, of the common necessaries of life, to buy more meal for those in need. As a substitute for snuff, which was also very dear, he made use of a sort of snuff of heath, which he had manufactured on that occasion, and also pinched himself of food, eating only a little slink-veal every day for his dinner, as much as was barely sufficient to subsist on. The most indulgent father could not have the welfare of his family nearer his heart, than Mr. Skelton had that of his people. He used to say triumphantly, "they all came through, and none of them starved."

At this season of calamity, the lady of Mr. Knox, formerly a pupil of his at Monaghan, who was then deputy secretary of state, sent over money to his poor. Upon which he and his congregation publicly prayed for her and her husband. It is to be supposed, that they were not unmindful in their prayers of the rest of their benefactors.

In this year, or in the one immediately before or after, he sold his books, which consisted of seven hundred volumes, for a hundred pound*, to his intimate friend Dr. Woodward, Dean of Clogher, who is now the well-known Bishop of Cloyne; a Prelate whose arguments are able to convince, and his eloquence to please and reform. The defect of his faculties, which made him unfit to take

* At Fintona they assured me he got but a hundred pound for them, though I thought he told me he got more.

care of them, was his ostensible reason for parting with them ; but the real cause of it was, that he wanted money to give his poor, and the year after he bestowed on them sixty pounds. Some books that the Doctor did not choose to take he gave his Curate Mr. Auchinleck.

In hard times he made a present of half a year's rent to his poor tenants on the glebe, and, if absent, wrote to his tithe-farmer to give each of them a receipt for that sum.

In times of moderate plenty, he used to distribute money among indigent housekeepers, who yet strove to preserve a decent appearance. James West, with whom he lodged, often conducted him by his own desire to the dwellings of such, that he himself might examine into their state. Yet he at last made it a point not to give any thing away in charity in any house where he was called upon to visit a sick person ; having been deceived by those pretending to be sick that they might get money from him. He was once sent for to visit a sick woman, but when he came near the house, he saw her running hastily in, that she might get into bed before he would come.

It might be mentioned here, that Miss Ecklin of Stephen's Green, who was always so liberal to his poor, in the spring of 1788, bestowed on her poor tenants of Fintona thirty pounds to buy flax-seed, which with her is a usual donation.

In September 1778, he went up to Dublin in his

chaise, and drove on to St. Mary's church, where Mr. Jameson one of the curates happened to be at prayers. After prayers he said to him, "you must take me in, I am come to lodge with you." Mr. Jameson told him it would be very inconvenient for him, as his house was too small, and so on. But Mr. Skelton still insisting, he was forced to submit. He lived there some time very happily, until one night, that he went early to bed, there was a good deal of smoke in the house, which caused them to open the windows in the story above him to let out the smoke. This it seems disturbed him, and made him suppose they rattled the windows on purpose to make the house disagreeable to him. Next morning he told them his mind, and would not be convinced by their account of the smoke, but left the house immediately, nor could they prevail on him to come back to lodge with them again.

On the ensuing summer he returned to Fintona; but as he was then on the point of leaving it entirely, it may not be improper to introduce here a few more particulars of his conduct while there.

He not only assisted his poor by his charities, but also strove to promote his decent parishioners' children, if they got a suitable education. He told me, he wrote a whole quire of paper in letters, striving to get ordained a widow's son in Fintona, who was educated in the university of Edinburgh; but at last effected it by the kindness of his friend

the late Dean of Down. For this young gentleman, who was worthy of every attention, he soon obtained a very beneficial cure, which he holds at present under a clergyman* who, in point of character and fortune, is one of the most respectable persons in our church.

There was one Joseph Moore a miller's son at Fintona, whom he discovered to be a boy of great genius, and therefore sent him at his own expense to the school of Enniskillen, where he lived in the house with Dr. Scott, and afterwards had him entered in our university; but he died before he had completed his education, having naturally a tender constitution.

Dr. Gormley, the physician of Fintona, dying in very low circumstances, left behind him a helpless family of daughters. On which, Mr. Skelton, who was always a friend to the distressed, took the poor orphans under his care, and supported them till he put them in a way of supporting themselves. Those of them, that were of an age fit for it, he recommended for waiting-maids to ladies of fortune. One of them lived in that capacity with Miss Brooke, who afterwards informed him by letter, that the girl, who was bred a catholic, had voluntarily conformed to the protestant religion; which intelligence, it may be supposed, was very agreeable to him; though he had always, through a principle of delicacy, avoided speaking to her on

* Dr. Leslie of Tanderagee.

the subject of her religion, lest he might appear to use his influence on her in so nice a point, where one should be directed, not by complaisance, but conscience. One of these came to see him in Dublin, about the year 1782, and kneeled down on her knees to him to ask his blessing. Many indeed has he supported that were left desolate on the world.

Having toiled now fifty years in the office of the ministry with as much diligence as ever man did before, he found himself at length, through age and infirmities, incapable for the discharge of his public duty. His frame was now unable, as mentioned already, to withstand the keen sharp country air, especially in winter, as every blast pierced through him. He could not bear, he thought, the fatigue of travelling ninety miles every summer, from Dublin to Fintona, and of returning thence on the approach of winter. He therefore took his final departure from it, about 1780, and removed to Dublin, to end his days. His carriage and horses he made a present of to Mr. Leslie, of Nutfield, in the county of Fermanagh. At that time he boarded and lodged with Samuel Watson, the bookseller, who lived in Dame-Street. For himself and servant he paid him about seventy pounds a year, and provided his own wine.

My acquaintance commenced with this most excellent man in January 1781. A relation of mine, whose pleasure is to do good, took a filial

care of his two old sisters living in Dromore ; for which kindness he being very grateful expressed his desire to do as much for my friend, who only asked, that he would shew some countenance to me who was then a student in the university. Upon this he told him plainly, he could not promise to be of any use to me in the church, having but little interest in it, but he would assist me with his good advice. In compliance with his desire I waited on him at his lodgings, and found him in his bed-chamber, where he always sat unless when he had company he could not make free with. He was a remarkably tall large man ; his eyebrows were quite grey ; his shoulders somewhat bent by age ; and his bones nearly twice the size of those of an ordinary man. He wore a brown wig, a blue coat with black cuffs, the breast of which was covered over with snuff, black velveret waistcoat and breeches, yarn stockings made of black wool, and small silver buckles in his shoes. His countenance showed he had been handsome in his youth, and visibly displayed in it that genuine philanthropy which he possessed in such an eminent degree. He received me with kindness free from ostentation ; but began soon to rally me for having bright steel buttons on my coat, which he thought too gay for one of a bachelor's standing in the university. "You're finely dressed (he observed) with your fine bright buttons ; I thought you were a man of sense and a scholar, but I have been deceived,

I find ; I believe you are but an indifferent sort of a body ; I always judge of a man by his buttons." However, in a few minutes he became more civil, and, after conversing on different subjects, we parted on good terms. I renewed my visits, to which I was enticed by his agreeable and instructive conversation ; but took care never to show him the bright buttons again.

His manner of living then was simple and regular. He rose at nine o'clock in the morning, and took a breakfast of herb-tea, having not drunk foreign tea for thirty years before. Then he passed about an hour at prayer. After prayer he read two chapters in the old testament, two in the new, and four psalms, which latter, as he told us, conduced to enliven his piety. Then he generally amused himself at entertaining books until dinner, and after spending an hour at it, read until nine o'clock at night, when he took a supper of bread and whey, and then summoned the people he lived with to family-prayer ; after which he employed himself at his books until eleven, and went to bed. His bed-chamber was like a stove, he kept it so close, and burnt in it, except in the heat of summer, night and day such huge fires. This was his general way of living. Now and then indeed he went out to pay visits to those he esteemed, and attended church regularly every Sunday, where he still sat in the reading-desk. At his lodgings he was visited sometimes by ecclesiastics of con-

sequence, and others ; but more usually by poor curates and readers, to whom he preached up content with their condition, and submission to superiors. Indeed he was always giving them good advice, reminding them of the sacred obligation laid on them, and telling them how they should be useful to the souls and bodies of the people under their care. He also now and then offered a little advice to his superiors, some of whom were not offended at his freedom.

Among these may be reckoned the Archbishop of Dublin. His Grace having paid him a visit at Mr. Watson's, he ventured to give him some advice, and at the same time begged pardon for the liberty he took. On which this Prelate politely replied, "Sir, it is usual to look up to Bishops, but I look up to you." He recommended once a candidate for holy orders to his Grace, observing, that he was only acquainted with him for one year, but knew more of him during that time than others could ordinarily do in three years. "I'll ordain him," he rejoined, "on this recommendation." The Archbishop, who was fond of his company, often pressed him to come and dine with him, but he declined his kind invitations, as he did not choose to be out at night, which he found hurtful to his constitution. His Grace offered then to send his carriage for him, and home with him. Once he seemed to consent to go, but when the hour of the day approached, he sent an apology, apprehensive

of getting cold. It is pleasing to see the second character in the Irish church pay such attention to so good a man. Mr. Skelton was sensible of his kindness, and used to say that this Prelate was a good-natured man, and a friend to religion. "He is warm," he remarked, "but that is a concomitant of good nature." He then mentioned an instance of his Grace's conduct, in his public capacity, highly to his honour; but it is not, I think, prudent to publish it, lest it should seem to reflect on a certain eminent layman. On another occasion he observed, that no one read the service of our church with so much solemnity and devotion as the Archbishop of Dublin.

His first visit to the Archbishop at his palace put him in mind of a sharp remark of the famous Archbishop King's, which he mentioned to his Grace the present Archbishop. When he was last in that room, he was just going, he said, to take his degree, having, with some more candidates for degrees, accompanied the proctor who brought them, as usual, to present them to his Grace. They found the old Archbishop sitting on a chair, and propt up with pillows on every side of him, having before him a table with two or three folios on it. After the ceremony of introduction, his Grace being informed that one of the candidates was a young Lord who had been very attentive to his books, and was a good scholar, he said to him in a drawling voice, "My Lord, I am happy to

find you have been so diligent, and have made such proficiency in your learning, but I have a piece of advice to give you, which I hope you will take, be as unlike the rest of the Lords of Ireland as you can, and then you'll do very well, you'll do very well."

Mr. Skelton, I believe, commenced his acquaintance with the Bishop of Cloyne when he was Dean of Clogher, for whom and for his family he had a high respect. His opinion of this Prelate's great abilities both as a preacher and a writer was such as is generally held in this kingdom, and even acknowledged by most of his opponents. His Lordship, he said, exceeded all preachers in tones, and Dr. Campbell in propriety of action; which latter he ascribed to his extraordinary skill in drawing. The Bishop of Raphoe he esteemed for refusing, when he was a Dean, on a scruple of conscience, another good living when it was offered to him. With respect to himself, he prayed God might strike him dead when he formed a thought of taking two livings. Once, he said, he could have obtained a second living, but he refused.

Yet we must not suppose that he spoke always in a strain of high panegyric of dignified ecclesiastics. But it would not be safe to touch on this delicate subject, and therefore at present every reader must strive to form a supposition for himself. I might produce here some of his sharp remarks both on persons and practices, which, however

agreeable to others, would probably be injurious to myself. He used to advise Bishops to take care of their old curates, and reward their faithful services. To one in particular, to whom he gave this advice, he said, "My Lord, if you do so, the curates will be more attentive to their duty, for I must say, to the shame and scandal of the clergy, that there is scarce one of them who would not do more for a living of a hundred a year than for the whole Kingdom of Heaven." However, his advice was so disagreeable to the Bishop, that he could never after gain an admittance into his Lordship's presence.

His late Rector Mr. Hawkshaw, whom in jest he called *Measter*, when he came to Dublin, paid him frequent visits. Indeed, from their first acquaintance they had lived on the most friendly footing, in the mutual exchange of every kind office.

In February 1781, the late Dr. Forsayth of Trinity College waiting on Mr. Skelton informed him that the university, sensible of his great merit, had sent him to offer him the degree of Doctor of Divinity, if he would accept of it. Yet he declined this intended honour with expressions of gratitude to the university, observing that he was too old to assume any new title. He told me, he was unable from age and infirmities to go through the collegiate exercises appointed on such occasions, and otherwise he would not take the degree. Besides, he said Jesus Christ forbade him

to be a Doctor, quoting a text of scripture which he imagined to favour this odd opinion.

If a Doctor of Divinity ought to be deeply read in the science he professes, there were but few so well qualified as he to obtain that distinction. The perusal of the holy scriptures employed a great part of his time, to which he was excited by a sense of duty, making use of all human means necessary to assist him in that spiritual study. His knowledge in divinity was equal to his diligence, of which he has given evident proofs by his learned works upon that subject. For the assistance I received from him in that most useful science I have a right to be grateful. He advised me to read Leland's view of the state of religion in the Heathen world, which, he said, was the best book extant on the subject, candidly acknowledging that that author showed the necessity of revelation even more clearly than he did in Deism Revealed. "When you have read that book," he said, "you may take the bible into your hand, for he proves it to be the word of God." He told us it was he that first proposed the plan of this book to Dr. Leland, but he did not acknowledge it, though he returned thanks in his preface for the assistance he got from others. He recommended the study of the Septuagint rather than the Hebrew, which was not, he said, sufficiently understood by the critics who revived it. He also advised me to read the Greek testament without a comment, that I might hence

perceive the meaning which the original language naturally presented; and explained to my satisfaction some passages which I could not fully understand. In the margin of his bible he wrote many curious explanatory notes, the most of which he afterwards published in his *Senilia*.

His knowledge, however, was not confined to divinity. He was a complete master of every subject literary men usually converse on. I have gained more information by two hours' conversation with him on an evening, than I did by studying hard at books a whole day. A young gentleman, a member of a debating society in the university, who was obliged to be prepared on a certain night in a part of the Life of Philip of Macedon, told me, that he happened to call on Mr. Skelton a day or two before the time, who acquainted him more accurately in an hour's conversation with every particular he wished to know, than if he had spent a whole day reading on the subject.

Beside the assistance already mentioned he gave me some useful advice with respect to composition. In compliance with his desire I showed him some little pieces in prose of my own composition, which he found great fault with for want of perspicuity. I was therefore forced to pluck out of them many fine flowers which served only to conceal the sense. He advised me to copy some parts of Swift, of Robertson's History of Scotland, and of Blair's Sermons, to improve my style; of which I found

the advantage. It is, however, necessary to observe, that every man of genius writes in a style peculiar to himself; he has a just confidence in his own powers, and dares to judge for himself. Many writers of inferior abilities have made themselves completely ridiculous by attempting to imitate the peculiarities of great authors. Of all writers, Mr. Skelton said, Lactantius was the most clear, for in perusing him you seem to read only ideas not words.

Having left Mr. Watson's about the beginning of the year 1782, he went to board and lodge with a Mr. B— in B— Street, a curious character, with whom he thought he should be very happy, as he was a man of a serious turn, and fond of talking about religion. He formerly kept a snuff-shop in C— Street, but having made a lucky hit at the tobacco, as he thought, at the beginning of the war, he then, quitting the snuff-shop, became all at once a grand tobacco merchant. In his religious opinions he was somewhat fickle, for he generally changed them once a year; having been in his time a Church-of-England-Man, Moravian, Anabaptist, Presbyterian, Quaker, Seceder, Newlight-Man, Oldlight-Man, Mountain-Man, and the like. Skelton and he were then often together, for he used to break in on him to argue with him on religious matters. They argued then furiously whole hours at once; but B—, he acknowledged, beat him at quoting scripture, as he had it all by heart. He had odd

notions then about the influence of the Spirit, and forms of prayer, supporting them with great vehemence; which made me ask Mr. Skelton if he were a Methodist? "Oh yes," he said, "a powerful Methodist, he is inspired." Yet with all his religion he was a little fleshly given, as I am assured, though he had a wife of his own. Indeed you would not suspect this from his appearance, for he was a gross little man, dressed in a blue coat, with a grave melancholy face; somewhat bald; having a few gray hairs scattered on the back of his head, and hanging stiffly down. You would rather, indeed, on looking at him, suspect he was a Methodist Preacher, an office, I believe, he sometimes used; at least, if he did not preach publicly, he exhorted the brethren in private.

Mr. Skelton's situation here was not over pleasant. He was by nature of a social turn, and from age often stood in need of company; therefore he now and then asked his friends to dine with him, when he always paid for their dinner; but this, it seems, was not agreeable to Mrs. B—, who set up for a grand lady, and did not choose to entertain the persons he asked to her house, though these were such as might amuse and instruct her. He told me once he was sorry he could not ask me to dine with him, as Mr. B— had sent him a letter into his room a day or two before, informing him, it was inconvenient for his wife to entertain his company; so that, if he could not be

without these, he must change his lodgings. He said, he would provide other lodgings for himself before winter; but he would soon go out to the Phœnix-Park to spend one or two of the summer months at the Hibernian School *.

He had boarded and lodged the summer before in the same place, at the house of the Revd. Mr. O'Neill chaplain to the School, who, having a relish for his conversation, used every means to make his house agreeable to him. About June of this year he went out to live at this gentleman's during the summer, having left Mr. B—'s in consequence of the letter he received. Soon after his arrival here he got a terrible fall which might have killed an ordinary person of his age, but it did him no harm. However, he took it into his head about the end of July, that he was just going to die, and was visited then, among others of consequence, by Dr. Hastings, and the Bishop of Cloyne. His disorder at that time was, I believe, mostly the effects of imagination. At least his physician Dr. Fleury seemed to think so. Yet it was observed, that in the latter part of his life he was not so much affected with imaginary complaints as before. Experience had probably in some degree convinced him of the inanity of his gloomy conjectures, and therefore he did not yield so much to the influence of imagination.

* A School for educating the orphans and children of Soldiers in Ireland.

A few weeks after he was attacked by this disorder, I wrote him a letter from the North of Ireland, requesting his assistance in a particular affair; on which occasion he applied in my behalf with the sincerity of a friend. In his answer he mentioned, as the business seemed to require, what a high respect the late Dean Bailie had for a certain illustrious lady, who was so eminent for her charities, and then made use of these words; "The Dean knows me too, but affects to revolve in an orbit so far above me, as scarce to see me twinkling below him; the distance equally diminishes his magnitude to my eyes."

While he staid at the Hibernian School, he catechised the children every Sunday in the chapel at the communion table, and lectured most instructively on the catechism. One of his lectures I had the happiness to hear, and was pleased and improved by it. He was indeed remarkably fond both of soldiers and seamen, and once gave this advice to Miss Bruce, "marry a soldier, my girl, for you will find more honest soldiers than honest parsons."

He offered ten guineas to make a reservoir to keep water in for the benefit of the school, on condition it should be built with stones alone without mortar, which he thought would make it more durable. But the mason refusing to comply of course did not get the money.

On his return to Dublin about the beginning of

October, he took up his abode in Trinity Street, at the house of Kinahan and Gregg, grocers, with whom he had agreed for his diet and lodging. The Dublin Evening Post being published next door to him, I once asked him if he ever read it? "No," he replied, "I have not read a newspaper these five years past, I have nothing to do with this world; for I am just on the point of leaving it. Besides, they are all full of malice which must offend a christian to see." When I remarked to him that he seemed to know all that was in the papers, he observed, that he heard it from those who came to see him, as they were often talking of politics.

His antagonist Mr. B—, at whose house he lodged before, used to visit him in Trinity Street, and argue with his usual violence, being very stiff in the opinions he adopted for the time. He had then, it seems, assumed some new notions, as he was not so much of a Methodist as formerly. One evening I was sitting with Mr. Skelton when his servant brought him in a letter, which, on opening, he perceived to come from B—, stuffed with texts of scripture, on some of the points they were disputing about a day or two before. For B—, as it suited him, attacked his adversary either in close fight, or threw his darts at a distance; so eager was he for victory. He was strenuous in asserting the necessity of extempore prayer, despising all forms, as is usual with fanatics.

A few more particulars of this original character

may, not improperly, be introduced here. In January, 1787, having come to Dublin after two years' absence, I saw him walking through the streets with a long gray beard, like that of an old Turk or Rabbi. On inquiry, I found he had appeared in that trim some time before in a coffee-house, when the people, gathering about him, asked him why he wore the long beard? He replied gravely, he would not shave his beard till he had paid his debts, having failed in the year 1785. Soon after his failure, on a meeting of his creditors at his house, they asked him how he could account for the great deficiency in his affairs? On which he called for the bible, that he might reply scripturally, and read to them the first verse of the thirtieth chapter of Job in a grave solemn voice; "*but now they that are younger than I, have me in derision, whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock.*" This was the only answer he would give them. When one of them a Mr. L— said to him, "these are two handsome pistols over the fire-side." "Yes they are," he replied. Then taking them down, he put one into his hand, and kept the other to himself, and said to him, "will you take a shot?" Which made Mr. L— run out of the house in dread of his life. Thus did he settle accounts with his creditors.

Some time after my return to the country I received a letter from a friend in Dublin, a man of

real original humour, informing me, that Mr. B—, who had so often changed his religions before, had now at last turned Papist. He enclosed me B—'s *Apology* to the public for so doing, with his name annexed. It was printed and spread through Dublin to justify his character which was maliciously attacked by some evil-minded persons. In this he candidly owns his having adopted at different times the religious opinions of almost every species of protestants. On his becoming a Papist he shaved his beard, and resumed his usual appearance; on which my friend's little nephew, who heard him declaring in the coffee-house he would not shave his beard till he had paid his debts, came running up to him one day with joy in his face, and said, "uncle! uncle! B— has paid his debts, for I see him walking through the streets without the beard."

Having been drawn naturally into this short digression, I return now to the course of my narrative.

In 1782, Mr. Skelton was deprived by death of his old friend and patron the Bishop of Clogher, who lived until he was above ninety; so long did it please God to bless the world with this good Bishop, who, to the honour of his country, was born in England. He had the satisfaction of having promoted some worthy men of great merit, but little interest; among whom, beside Mr. Skelton, is Dr. Thomas Campbell, who has paid a just

tribute of praise to him in the *Philosophical Survey of Ireland*. The Bishop was a pious, humble, good-natured man, a generous encourager of literature, kind to his domestics, and justly esteemed by all those who had an opportunity of knowing his virtue.

This same year produced also another event, which affected Mr. Skelton even more sensibly than the death of his good friend the Bishop of Clogher. It being uncommonly wet and cold both in seed-time and summer, the poor scanty crop, that escaped from the inclemency of the weather, was not fit to be cut down until winter approached, and then it was mostly destroyed by the rain. Mr. Skelton foresaw, with many others, that a dearth should be the consequence of all this, and endeavoured, like the Patriarch of Egypt, to provide against this calamity. In the winter he sent first a large sum of his own to Drogheda to buy oatmeal for his poor, and then applied, as usual, to those who had landed property in the parish; all of whom contributed except a Mr. D— who holds a bishop's lease. With these contributions, and an additional sum of his own, he bought more meal at Drogheda, where the whole was stored during the winter, in order to be conveyed in certain portions to his parish, when the dearth should require it. He was not deceived in his apprehensions. The famine that prevailed in the summer of 1783, was the most severe that even

history records to have taken place in Ireland. The poor in many parts must have died of hunger, had they not been relieved by the liberal donations of those whom Providence blessed with riches. While the famine was advancing towards its height, Mr. John Latouche carried a message to Mr. Skelton from his father to this effect, that if he wanted money to buy meal for his poor, he might draw on his bank for any sum he stood in need of, which he would willingly bestow for so good a purpose. Mr. Skelton, who had never seen the good old gentleman, being surprised at this uncommon liberality, replied, that he was very grateful for his kind offer, but that he had sufficient to keep his poor alive without taking money from him, who employed his wealth in doing good. The generosity of this truly charitable man, who is now gone to reap the fruits of his labours, and of his worthy family, whose purses have also been always open to relieve the distressed, is sufficiently known in this kingdom without any commendation of mine.

Mr. Skelton, during this dearth, intrusted the distribution of the meal to his curate Mr. Auchinleck, who assured me, that this good clergyman laid out on it, beside the contribution of others, two hundred pounds of his own. At dinner he used to say to us, I cannot suffer my poor parishioners to starve in hard times, for they have fed me on good fare these many years past. His first toast now after dinner was the family of the

Latouches, who had souls, he said, of a superior nature to the generality of men. His next was Richmond the dancing-master, which he usually prefaced with these words ; "I give you the health of a hero, Richmond the dancing-master." He then told us of the noble exploits performed by this brave old man, a short account of which I transcribe from his *Senilia*.

"One night, after his seventy fifth year, having "read prayers with his family, he heard, as he "was going to bed, a loud cry of murder in a "female voice, repeated from an house, not far "from his own, in Prince's Street, Dublin. This "hurried him down to his parlour with a case of "pistols in his hands, followed by his daughter. "The cry still continuing, he opened a window, "but it was too dark without to see any thing. "Having a providential apprehension for his "daughter, though none for himself, he had just "time to push her from the window behind the "adjoining pier, when one of the robbers, of whom "there were six, fired on him, and the ball passed "through the place where his daughter stood. "Richmond, by the light of the villain's discharge, "shot him dead. He and a brave servant-boy "of his then sallied into the street, where per- "ceiving by the woman's cries, that the rest of the "gang had got into the house of a neighbour con "fined to his bed by sickness, and were by re "peated wounds murdering the servant-maid, he,

"his boy, and some of the watch then coming to "his assistance, soon cleared the house, fought "the gang in the street, knocked one of them "down with a clubbed pistol, pursued the rest, "and took two of them, whom he lodged in New-"gate, before he returned to his terrified family. "The prisoners he afterwards prosecuted to the "gallows. It was but too plain, this was the first "time the brave man had been concerned in "blood. It was with difficulty that the minister "of his parish could prevent his sinking under "the grief of having sent a fellow-creature into "eternity with a load of guilt on his head. Some "time after, this undaunted man going homeward "at night, found a servant boy crying in the street, "who had been just then robbed by three footpads "of a tankard, which he had been sent out with "for some drink. These Richmond instantly pur-"sued into a close back-yard, being joined by "a stranger of a spirit like his own. They were "fired upon by the villains, but they took two of "them, and afterwards had them convicted and "executed. It has been said, that my hero "acquitted himself with similar honour in a third "adventure with robbers, the particulars of which "I am not acquainted with."

If Richmond had lived in heroic ages, he would have been crowned with laurel, he said, as a public benefactor of mankind; and then accused this country of ingratitude for not rewarding his use-

ful services. The Duke of Rutland, during his lieutenancy, once met Mr. Richmond in the park, and asked him, if he were the person mentioned by Mr. Skelton in his last volume? He answered he was. His Grace then promised to provide for him, but died before he was able to effect it.

A few months before the dearth already mentioned, a young man from Fintona, who was then a journey-man apothecary in Dublin, being attacked by a violent disorder, Mr. Skelton paid a nurse-tender half a guinea a week to take care of him, and employed a physician to visit him twice a day. When he grew a little better, he sent him to Fintona for the advantage of his native air, and on his return to Dublin had a place provided for him. His father, who was then dead, had been a great favourite with Mr. Skelton, as he dealt extensively in linen-yarn, and was thus very useful to the industrious poor at Fintona.

While he was employed in supplying the wants of his indigent parishioners, he had an interview, in May of the same year, (1783) with the late missionary Mr. Wesley, who was then also engaged in his work of charity. This being their first meeting, they had no religious altercation. A few days after Mr. Wesley paid him a second visit, and on the evening of the same day I happened to visit him. He informed me then, that that gentleman had been with him in the morning, and told him something which he thought a little extraor-

dinary. A woman had come over to him from England, he said, who was plagued with a strange disorder in her belly; on which, being pressed to speak plainly and tell her complaint, he owned, after some hesitation, that it was the Devil, she said, she had got in her belly, and had applied for cure to many protestant bishops, popish priests, and presbyterian teachers, but all to no purpose. "What will you do then?" he asked him. "I expect," he replied, "to cure her by prayer and fasting, and the like." "Take care, Mr. Wesley," he remarked, "of what you are about; you want, I perceive, to support your new religion by the force of miracles; but if you once set up for working miracles, the people will flock to you from all quarters, they will meet you in the streets and high-ways, as they did our Saviour, and perhaps they may take you short; so that you may lose more than you'll gain by pretending to work miracles." He could not swallow Mr. Wesley's story about the woman with the Devil in her belly, and this gentleman thought it better to send her home to her own country, without attempting to take the Devil out of her.

However, if we can believe what he tells us in his journals, he has been very successful in effecting some cures of this sort. He went once, as he informs us *, to see a woman in this melancholy

* 3 Journ. p. 95.

state, and when he got to her, stoutly asked the Devil how he dare enter into a Christian? On which the Devil spoke thus to him out of her belly, "She is not a christian, she is mine." But Mr. W., it seems, soon forced my gentleman to shift his quarters.

Mr. Skelton, in his conversation with him, talked lightly of the common stories we hear about devils and ghosts, and mentioned to him in a ludicrous way, that some people in one of his parishes, who were wrong in the head, imagined they were haunted by these. But Mr. W. he said, was very grave, and did not seem willing to join in the joke. He should indeed have been inconsistent with himself, if he had; for there was scarce a magazine he put out, that had not some marvellous story in it of this kind. Yet he probably considered these and the like as so many pious frauds necessary to serve the cause of methodism, which usually has most effect on weak minds. And indeed it is but reasonable to think, that this extraordinary man had too much good sense to believe every absurdity he countenanced by his authority.

In June, Mr. Skelton shifted his lodgings again. Leaving the grocer's in Trinity-street, he went to board and lodge in Peter's-Row with the Revd. Richard Drury, a young clergyman whom he recommended for a cure to the Archbishop of Dublin. His reasons for going to live with this

clergyman were such as had always an effect on his benevolent mind.

His strenuous applications for me at this time to certain persons of consequence, the disappointments he then met with, and the excuses that were offered, I am obliged to omit, lest I should seem to obtrude myself or my affairs on the public attention, which of late has been the practice of some biographers, who had not prudence enough to conceal their vanity. Yet I shall not, I hope, be accused of this weakness by quoting a part of a letter he wrote me then, especially as it contains a general advice to every young clergyman on undertaking the care of a parish.

"You see I have lost no time nor ground which "I could use for you. And you see too how "I am made accountable for you to Lord * * *. "But pray consider, how awfully, and even "fearfully I am made accountable for you to an "infinitely greater Lord. You cannot blast me "without blasting yourself in the sight of God "and man. You are rather to derive fear than "vanity from the high character given of you, and "from the struggle made for you among the most "considerable men of the time, excited by the "providence of God. Let therefore a warm zeal "animate you to the service and glory of God, "and to the salvation of souls. Let the wisdom "of the serpent and the innocence of the dove "direct all your exertions. Let your words be

"few, slow, and articulate, that the hearer, whether "in church or company, may have no trouble in "taking your meaning, nor have occasion to find "fault with it when he understands it. Maturely "consider, that Lord * * *, Dean * *, and many "others, before whom you are to appear either "publicly or privately, have a thousand times "more sense than you. Think therefore before "you speak, and speak but little, enough for the "occasion, whatever it may be, and not a syllable "more. God direct and bless you. You cannot "conceive how great an object of apprehension "you are, to your poor old friend

PHIL. SKELTON."

It was indeed with propriety he prescribed to others, who was himself so eminent for his abilities in the pulpit, and his conduct in private life.

About the end of the same year, his ears were stunned with the fame of the pulpit-orator, Dr. Peckwell, who preached through Dublin in meeting-houses, methodist-houses and churches. Crowds followed after him enticed by novelty, as he preached without notes, which is a sure way of captivating the multitude, who are always taken with strange appearances. I went to Bride's Church to hear him, and sat in the Reading Desk with Mr. Skelton, who, though he complimented him when he had finished on the orthodoxy of his Sermon, yet afterwards remarked to me, that his

action seemed more violent than proper. "When I looked up at him," he said, "I saw his arms from my seat under the pulpit moving over my head, like the arms of a wind-mill." He also observed, that he was too handsome for a preacher, as the women, instead of profiting by his sermons, would be only wishing to be in bed with him. Our Saviour's person and face were, he said, on that account, rather ordinary, as some of the Fathers inform us. About three months after, he sent him from England a sermon he had just then published, the merits of which I thought not extraordinary. But a cold phlegmatic reader is not so easily pleased as a hearer who is warmed and captivated by the voice, gesticulations and countenance of the extempore preacher. *Adde vultum habitumque hominis.*

To remedy in some degree the inconvenience that attends the use of notes, Mr. Skelton advised me to follow his method of copying my sermons in a large fair hand. It was indeed his ardent wish, that the clergy of our church, in their public and private conduct, should afford no pretence for the cavils of sectaries, some of whom tell us we read our sermons *like a ballad.* Yet he was possessed, I think, with an unreasonable dread of the presbyterians; for he imagined they would have taken his living from him before he died; one of them, he said, who was a volunteer, told him so. But his apprehensions, we may suppose,

were partly the effects of old age. *Senectus falsâ formidine ludit.*

If the people of our church were allowed to adopt the presbyterian mode of choosing their own clergy, it would produce, he said, more harm than good. For in that case, the landlords would oblige them to vote for those they pleased, as they do now at elections, because it would then be worth their while to interfere to get a friend or a relation a good living. "If so" (he continued) "I should never have got a living, for my father was only a plain countryman." But if there were opposite interests in a parish, this would produce boxing, quarrelling, and ill will. It appears then, that injustice would be done according to that mode; injustice, it is owned, is also done now, and since injustice must be done, let it be done quietly.

He was not only qualified for sober reasoning of this kind, but could adapt his conversation and behaviour to his company. I never found him out of temper, but always gay and good-humoured. He was never sour or sullen with the young, but made a proper allowance for the levities peculiar to their age, having nothing of the old man about him, except that he was a little deaf. Of children he was remarkably fond, and could spend hours with them partaking of their little sports.

Some time after this he consented to dine with a certain Bishop, on condition he would

have dinner on the table at two o'clock; but Mr. Skelton came exactly at twelve, when his Lordship and his lady were going out on business. The Bishop told him he was very sorry he came so soon, as Mrs. * * and he were obliged to go out, and could not be home until two. But he observed, that his Lordship need not be concerned, as he would amuse himself with "these sweet little things," pointing to the children. Accordingly, he diverted himself with them, at ball or marbles, or such like childish sports, until his Lordship returned, when he told him he was charmed with their company, and that they only wanted wings to be angels.

A part of a letter he wrote me, when I complained of being too much disturbed by the noise of children, may serve still more to illustrate his character in this particular. "Play with the "children," (he said) "now and then, the best "method of conciliating their father and mother; "and then little laughing children are, of all "others, the sweetest and most pleasing com- "panions. Give one of them an apple, and "another a fig, and settle with them not to be too "noisy when you are at your book or pen. At "other times, invite them to be noisy with your- "self, and to ride on your back."

Though his company was so agreeable, yet he frequently spent his evenings alone, and often told me, when I called to see him, that it was a

charity to come and sit with him a while, he was so much deserted. Of his conversation, however instructive and amusing, I was deprived in the beginning of the ensuing year, (1784) but still enjoyed the benefit of his letters.

In the same year he published by subscription his sixth volume, entitled *An Appeal to common Sense on the Subject of Christianity, &c.* This volume, the profits of which were, as the former ones, to be applied to the Magdalen Charity, is also dedicated to Lady Arabella Denny.

The Appeal is, in my opinion, superior in style and arrangement to any thing he wrote before. It is in general plain, sensible, void of false ornament, from which his sermons and other pieces are not entirely free. It contains an historical proof of the truth of christianity, and shows his faculties were in their full force at the age of seventy-six. To this are added *Some Thoughts on Common Sense*, in which there are some attempts at wit not always successful; for his wit, though excellent in company, seemed to evaporate when communicated to paper. The rest of this volume consists of thirteen hymns, with a poetic introduction to them, and a Latin poem, which appear rather calculated to enliven his own piety in private than to excite devotion in others.

A few days after the publication of this volume he received the following letter.

"Revd. Sir,

"I have read your appeal to common "sense on the subject of christianity. I wish all "the world could say the same, but at present "few can have that advantage. If you will permit "a less expensive edition to be published, that "may be the means of rendering the circulation "more extensive, and of promoting the great end "for which you laboured.

Summer-Hill, Sept. 21, 1784. "I am your humble Servant "SARAH STRINGER."

In compliance with this proposal, which, it may be supposed, was very agreeable to him, a cheaper edition was published soon after at her expense, with the foregoing letter prefixed. When it was in the press, he sent her twelve pounds to pay part of the expense of printing, but she refused to take it. Of this edition he bestowed about two hundred on each of the parishes he had the care of either as curate or rector.

Mrs. Stringer having earnestly requested him to permit her to have his picture taken, he at last consented, on her promise of allowing no one to take a copy of it, and of destroying it before she died. This lady then employed a Mr. Holmes to draw it on canvass, who made as exact a likeness as I ever saw *. Formerly a Mr. John Eccles of

* She died in the latter end of March, having destroyed the picture three months before.

Fintona took his picture in profile, but he would not sit to have it taken in full.

He was accused this year of being author of a political pamphlet called the *Alarm*, which he publicly disavowed in a newspaper.

The favourable reception of the Appeal induced him, even at so advanced an age, to continue writing for the public, which he offered partly as an apology for not writing to me as often as he could wish, as appears by the following extract of a letter I received from him in October 1785.

"My not answering your letters so soon as "both you and I wish is not by any means owing "to my forgetfulness of, or indifference to you. "My esteem of you, and my friendship for you, "are still the same. But my health is precarious, "and my spirits, for the greater part, low. Besides "I am even yet hammering out a seventh volume, "and have near enough to fill it up, of matter "extremely miscellaneous and unconnected. Every "thing I happen to think of goes into the farrago; "but it consists mostly of short answers to infidel "arguments, intermixed with strokes of humour, "and even natural curiosities. The new mode of "franking letters is yet a greater obstacle to my "correspondence with you; for as the franks "must be dated, when I have got one of them, "indisposition, or business, or visits run me beyond "the date, and the cover is lost. I can have no "frank for this, and therefore send the postage

"with it, that my poor curate need not pay for "that, which is not worth a farthing."

In the following year his seventh volume was published, entitled *Senilia, or an old Man's Miscellany.* The purport of it is, in some degree, explained in the foregoing extract. Its materials are indeed very various, and wrought into a style tolerably natural and agreeable ; but the most valuable part of it all is, in my opinion, *Brief Observations on some passages of the New Testament*, which are useful, intelligible, consistent with scripture and common sense.

This volume, being also octavo, was published by Sleater, to whom Mr. Skelton, when he gave him the copy, agreed to pay twenty pounds to purchase the paper, being diffident of its success, as it was written in extreme old age. But this bookseller informed him, when it was in the press, that he was of opinion it would be attended with the sale desired, and that he would not take the money. This is an instance of generosity somewhat extraordinary, as but few men of business, in such a case, would have any scruple to take whatever sum should be offered them.

A part of these twenty pounds, and also of the twelve pounds which Mrs. Stringer refused to accept of, he bestowed on the poor in Dublin, and the rest on those in Fintona, who had a more natural claim on him than the others. Yet a great city affords such innumerable objects of

charity, that a man of a benevolent mind, who lives there, is excited both by his feelings and his duty to relieve some of them. A young clergyman, who was intimate with Mr. Skelton, went once by his desire to a bank in Dublin, to know if they would exchange for him eleven light half-guineas, which they had sent him; but on his return from the bank, he found that he had given them all away to the poor.

Yet, in the distribution of his charities, he seldom gave any thing to those we call *gentle beggars*, who tell us, they lived formerly in a genteel way, but by crosses and losses were brought to their present distresses. A woman of this sort came to his lodgings in Dublin one day asking for charity; but when he began to speak to her in his usual tone of voice, she requested he would speak low, for being a gentlewoman, she did not wish it should be known that she asked charity. "O then," said he, "you may go about your business, for I never give charity to a gentlewoman."

He published this year (1786) a short answer to a catechism, used at Sunday Schools, written by one Watson, a Yorkshire vicar, which he supposed to contain an erroneous doctrine with respect to the state of men immediately after death. This answer he sent to all the Bishops in England and Ireland, that they might exert their authority against a book of such pernicious tendency. Accord-

ingly, the Archbishop of Dublin stopt the use of it in his diocess.

The summer and autumn of this year was remarkable, it is well known, for the ravages of the Right-boys, who, without any pretence of justice, robbed the established clergy in the South of most of their property. These insurgents, though barbarians themselves, contributed to serve the cause of literature, as they gave rise to many most excellent pamphlets, which otherwise would never have been produced. The rights of the clergy thus invaded became a general subject of conversation, not only with themselves, but also with the laity. Every news-paper gave some new account of the horrid doings of these rioters, who feared neither God nor man. The news-papers also abounded with many wild proposals for a commutation of tithe, communicated to the public fresh from the heads of essayists or paragraph-writers, residing in aerial habitations. Amidst this general fermentation, I wrote to Mr. Skelton to get his opinion on these matters, and received the following letter, which, for evident reasons, I give entire.

DUBLIN, *Bride Street*, No. 45, *Nov.* 4, 1786.

Dear Burdy,

"No more than one letter of yours to "me, beside this of the present month, occurs "to my declining memory, and in that you kindly "excuse my answering every letter. The infir-

"mities of a man approaching near to his eightieth "year, makes such an indulgence indeed very "requisite; especially, as since we saw each other, "a sixth and then a seventh volume of my works "have been published; and I am now republish- "ing the sermons of Robert Walker, a Scottish "presbyterian minister, which have deservedly had "five previous editions in Great Britain. To this "sixth edition, I prefix a long letter of my own to "encourage both the Dublin bookseller, and the "Irish reader. The sermons of this worthy "author, deceased two or three years ago, are "most excellent in themselves, and greatly wanted "in these times.

"Any advice you may have received from me, "it was but a small part of my duty to impart "to one so much younger than myself, and but "a poor proof of my friendship for you. You do "better in remembering it, than I should do in "thinking of it.

"The inquiries you make in this letter show to "me, that you purpose addressing the public by "somewhat, and on a subject not a little ticklish. "Take care, while you think you are treading only "on ashes, that there is not a great deal of fire "under your feet.

"I cannot more exactly than you do repeat the "resolution of the House of Commons concerning "the rights and demands of the clergy; nor the "year of its date, but I know it was made when

"Boyle was speaker, I believe, about forty years "ago. The demands of the clergy for tithe "agistment was so founded on common law, that "they carried all the causes in the court of "Exchequer, which they commenced before that "vote, but never durst since commence another. "Who spoke for, or who against that vote, in the "house, I do not remember, and hardly guess at "the time.

"The Southern insurgents are sinking the rights "of our clergy, wherever they prevail, to a third "of what had been formerly received, which could "not have been much more than half of what was "due. The immediate cause of this is obvious to "every body. The primary cause is equally "intelligible to me. We clergy (I include myself) "are objects of displeasure in the eyes of God. "Our luxury, pride, and neglect of duty must be "punished. We must be put in mind, that there "is a God. Poverty and oppression must bring "us to ourselves, or extermination must follow. "When church livings shall no longer be worth "struggling for, the shameful market made of "them will cease, and here I cease with an "assurance that I am still your real friend

"PHIL. SKELTON."

This was the last letter he ever sent me. In January I saw him again in Dublin, where I found him in Bride-street, living with the same family,

who had removed thither. He appeared visibly on the decline, but a severe cold, from which he was recovering, probably made him look worse; this he imagined would be the cause of his death, for he told me he would die in eight days. But in a day or two after, having shook off these gloomy notions, he regained his usual gaiety. Yet he was still saying he could not live long, as he would be eighty years of age, if he lived to the end of the next month. He complained then as before of the lonely manner he spent his time, observing that every one seemed to be tired of him. No one indeed could be tired of his company, who had a taste for rational, agreeable, and improving conversation, for even then his social qualities were scarce any wise impaired. But it is the fate of man to experience neglect in the decline of life, when it is suspected he can be no longer useful.

At that time I attended his family prayer one or two evenings, when I found he had made an additional prayer about the Right-boys, in which he prayed that God would turn these infatuated insurgents, who had risen up against his church, from their wicked ways. Indeed they stood in need of all good christians' prayers. He really believed that the presbyterians of the North, and the catholics of the South, had formed a combination against the established church to destroy it, which he supposed would soon be effected.

These apprehensions, however, for the safety of the church, to which he was often liable, were not then the mere effects of imagination, as the gloomy complexion of ecclesiastic affairs seemed to threaten some destructive revolution. The pamphlets published afterwards by the abettors of the opposite parties clearly displayed their cordial dislike to our church establishment.

His opinions upon every subject he communicated then with as much facility as when I saw him before; but the duties of my profession hurried me away from his pleasing and instructive company. In February, 1787, I parted for the last time from that dear and worthy man, of whose friendship I shall always retain a grateful remembrance. When I was just going away, he said to me, with tears in his eyes, "I know I shall never see you again, but God be with you, trust in Christ, and he will preserve you; when you meet with afflictions and disappointments in this world, as you surely will, ask for his gracious aid, and he will give it to you, he will comfort you in your sorrow. Preach the gospel to your people without any false refinements, and act as it becomes a minister of the gospel, and God will reward you." At these words I left him with a sorrowful heart, still reflecting as I passed along on this solemn expression of his, "I know I shall never see you again."

He prophesied at length too truly of himself.

On Good Friday the 6th of April he was attacked with a suppression of urine, a complaint of which he had often felt symptoms before, on account of his taking so little exercise. The professional skill of his physician Dr. Fleury, and of Surgeon Bowes was unable to remove the disorder, which wasted him gradually. Yet he rose every day, and felt little or no pain, but just dozed away. While he attempted to read at his table, he usually fell asleep over his book and continued thus for some time. The disorder, which was owing, as the physician told me, to a total relaxation of the parts, was for a while in some degree abated by the use of a catheter, but even this at length proved inefficacious; he was then convinced it would be the cause of his death, though at first he did not imagine it would be so fatal. About this time a young man from Fintona called to see him, and found him dozing with his head on his table. Having inquired of him most affectionately concerning his parishioners, he lamented with tears in his eyes the irregularity of their conduct, but especially their unhappy propensity to drunkenness, of which all his instructions could not cure them. The disorder, though it daily consumed his constitution, had no effect on his understanding, so that he saw death approaching with a calm and steady mind. The Revd. Doctor Hastings, Archdeacon of Dublin, attended him carefully during his illness; which, having confined him to his bed

only two days, put an end to his life on Friday the 4th of May, 1787. When he breathed his last you would have imagined he was just falling asleep, he died so quiet and resigned. The evening before he repeated intelligibly the Lord's Prayer, and never spoke after.

He had always a horror of coming to life in his coffin, and therefore, when he was even in good health, often requested his physician to cut his throat before he should be buried. It being accordingly thought necessary not to bury him, until some marks of corruption should appear on his body, he was kept until the Tuesday following, when he was buried privately at six o'clock in the morning, near the west door of St. Peter's churchyard, the place he had appointed for himself. His funeral was attended by six or seven Dublin curates, and by Dr. Hales of Trinity College. The short funeral service was read over his grave by Mr. Queal one of the curates of the parish.

He left behind him, after all his just debts were paid, near seven hundred pounds, of which at least five hundred and forty was due by his parish, including one hundred and twenty chargeable on his successor, for building part of a glebe house which lay in an unfinished state for some years previous to his death. So that he had hardly an hundred and fifty pounds clear in his own hands. The whole he disposed of by will * in the

* He begins his will thus, "In the name of the glorious and eternal Trinity, &c."

following manner. To his nephew Dr. Skelton, he left an hundred and fifty pounds, to his servant John Swap, forty, and the rest to Miss Leslie, daughter of Henry Leslie, Esqr. and granddaughter of the late Revd. William Leslie, his old friend. He appointed the Rev. Dr. Hastings, his sole executor. As an apology for his making his will in this manner he mentions in it, that he was indebted to the Revd. William Leslie, under God, for his preferments in the Church, and to his family for many kindnesses during a series of years. To his own relations, he declares, he owed nothing, as he had given them at different times above fourteen hundred pounds.

His manuscripts and his works he left to Dr. Hastings, whom he styles his excellent friend, and to his servant his clothes, his watch worth about thirty shillings, and all his other utensils, except four articles to Mr. Drury, with whom he lodged. His servant, who came to live with him in 1783, received from him in presents during the last year of his life, beside the sum left him in his will, twenty three pounds, for he had the art of insinuating himself into his good graces. He was a Scotchman, and an old soldier, but sober, wise, and remarkable for his discretion, a very useful talent. He also wrote a fair hand and copied for him the greatest part of his two last volumes. "Sweet Aberdeen," his master used to say, "that produced John and Dr. Reid."

PHILIP SKELTON, it has been shown, was of a tall stature and majestic appearance; his countenance was agreeable and placid, displaying evident marks of a mind replete with humanity. His strong athletic frame enabled him in his youth to excel in the manly exercises, of his skill in which and of his bravery sufficient specimens have been produced. But it was the chief business of his life, he considered, to perform the sacred duties of the ministry with conscientious care, wherein he was hardly exceeded by any clergyman of any age. Sincere, strenuous, vehement in his admonitions, he was truly sensible of the importance of the glorious end he had in view, the eternal happiness of his fellow-creatures. He told them of a heaven and a hell where the virtuous shall be rewarded and the wicked punished, exciting them by the most powerful arguments to seek the felicity of the one, and avoid the misery of the other. He declared open war against vice and impiety in every station, careless of the event, and only influenced by conscience. To instruct the ignorant, rouse the indolent, rebuke the obstinate, rectify the misguided, and *turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just*, was the great object of his labours.

His abilities were equal to his zeal. The natural powers bestowed on him by Providence he improved by an attentive application to almost every species of literature, but chiefly by a careful

perusal of the holy scriptures. His Sermons, fraught with good sense, and animated with the sacred truths of the gospel, were composed in a strong, nervous, oratorial style, that suited the forcible manner of his delivery. His action in the pulpit, which flowed from the sincerity of his heart, was either violent or temperate according to the nature of his subject. An argument he used in favour of this mode of preaching may not improperly be introduced. "Men," he said, "who are born deaf and dumb have the thoughts of others communicated to them by external signs, those who are born blind have them communicated by words, and therefore those who have them communicated both by words and signs must receive them more forcibly."

His descriptive faculties, and his command over the passions, were very powerful. A gentleman told me, he heard him describing in Werburgh's church the torments of hell in a manner so terrifying as made him shiver in his place. He preached once two Sundays successively in Lisburn church. The first Sunday (I was assured by a person present) he made his audience all laugh, the second he made them all cry. While he was delivering his awful lectures in his church, he has been often so much affected by the subject, that the tears trickled down his cheeks, which produced a similar effect on his hearers.

The purity of his life gave an additional

authority to his preaching. He prescribed no duty, enjoyned no mortification, of which he did not first set the example in his own private conduct. His charities, which, if not well authenticated, would be incredible, seem to lead us back to the pure and primitive age of the gospel when christians had all their worldly goods in common. Even in plentiful times he gave, it appears, the half of his income to feed the poor; but in a year of scarcity he did not allow himself the usual necessaries of life. His forgiving his indigent tenants their rent at such a season of calamity, his denying himself the use of snuff, his living on scanty fare for the sake of his poor, and above all, his selling his books to procure them subsistence, eminently display his unbounded and uncommon charity. In their sickness he supplied them with medicines and medical aid, and in their necessities with food. He had a horror to think of any one dying of hunger, and once gave this advice to his poor during a dearth, we may suppose before he got a living. "If you have not food, beg it; if you can't get for begging, steal, if you can't get by stealing, rob, and don't starve*." The fatherless, the widow, and those who were in real want, found him a benevolent assistant; yet he examined so carefully into the condition of those he relieved,

* This advice is countenanced by the authority of Solomon, Prov. 6. 30. *Men do not despise a thief if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry.*

that he was seldom imposed upon by improper objects of charity. It may be said, that having no wife and children to support, he had nothing else to do with his money but give it away to the poor; but on examining the conduct of mankind we will find, that those who have no children are at least as avaricious and uncharitable as those that have. The feelings of the latter are indeed more delicate than those of the former, as their tenderness for their own offspring contributes to excite in them a sympathy for the distresses of others. To his relations he was sufficiently munificent, though his charity obliged him to give them only a part; had he not indeed used extraordinary frugality, he could not have been so liberal to these and to the poor.

He was also eminent for the virtues of humility, sincerity, and gratitude. A clergyman, who professes himself the follower of a divine Master so distinguished for humility, should be decorated, he thought, above all others, with that amiable virtue. He therefore severely censured that pride and insolence so conspicuous in the conduct of some churchmen, who show themselves so very unlike the meek Author of christianity. The term gentleman, which is usually affixed to that of clergyman, he considered as highly improper, it being a title of worldly origin unsuitable to the spiritual nature of his office. Our Saviour, he remarked, was no gentleman, the Apostles were

no gentlemen; but, he said, our fine genteel clergy now a days do not wish to resemble our Saviour or his Apostles in any particular. Very different was the conduct of this humble pastor, who looked on his poorer brethren as his friends and fellow-creatures, as children of the same universal Parent, and candidates for the same blessed immortality.

His sincerity was at least equal to his humility. In his private dealings he would take no advantage of his neighbour, nor even rigorously require his due, having a soul superior to every thing mean. He was entirely divested of hypocrisy and dissimulation; he strictly kept his word, and spoke the truth publicly and privately, without apprehension, dreading only the reproaches of his own conscience, and the resentment of his Maker. On no occasion would he tell a lie himself, or even allow another to do it for him. When it was inconvenient for him to receive visitors, he would not order his servant, according to the fashionable mode, to say he was not at home, but bade him tell any one who called, that he was in his room but could not see company. I remember he once excluded almost every one from him for a fortnight, expecting then a visit from a certain dignified person whom he did not wish to see.

It may naturally be supposed he was not well skilled in the science of flattery, often more useful than real science for a man's promotion in the

world; for he could not say one thing, and think another, applaud that with his lips of which his heart disapproved. He was not fit, like a supple dependant, to sooth the vanity, or soften the crimes of the great; nor could he, by a tacit consent, or smiling rebuke, give countenance to vice. He openly declared his abhorrence of every mean and ungenerous deed, of every base compliance of principle for the sake of private advantage. As he would not admit of duplicity in himself, he could not bear it in others. He was remarkable indeed for a total disregard to his temporal interest, when it interfered with his duty; a virtue, it is said, not *always* prevalent among churchmen.

Yet he was sufficiently respectful to his superiors, ready to pay them every compliment they deserved, and grateful for the favours they conferred on him. His determination not to write against Dr. Clayton Bishop of Clogher, who gave him the first living, though he disliked his religious opinions, and his lamenting his unhappy fate already mentioned, proceeded from the same laudable principle. He entertained, as might be expected, a grateful esteem and sincere affection for his worthy patron Dr. Garnet, the late Bishop of Clogher, who was orthodox in his belief, and gentle and benevolent in his mind. His donations to the family of the Leslies were owing to the friendship he experienced from old Mr. Leslie of Ahavea.

In his own friendships he was faithful and strenuous, always exerting the little interest he had in favour of young men of merit, or at least of those whom he supposed to have had merit. For some of these he has been able to obtain curacies, and when he could not succeed, endeavoured to make them submit patiently to the disappointment. Upon their engaging in a ministerial employment he usually gave them an advice how to conduct themselves. To a young man who got a curacy in Dublin some years ago I heard him give this salutary advice. "Your parishioners will invite you to their public entertainments, and will press you to drink intemperately, but don't do it for them, for if you do, they will afterwards expose you." When a curate complained to him of not being rewarded in the church according to his merit, he strove to console him by this quotation from the Psalmist. *Promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south; but God is the judge; he putteth down one, and setteth up another.* He was indeed warm and affectionate to his friends, and mild and forgiving to his enemies, if it were possible for such a man to have had an enemy.

His mode of communicating his advice was extremely agreeable to those who received it; for he was not one of those haughty advisers, who only wish, by assuming imperious dignity, to show their own importance; his sole object being

the good of the person to whom he gave the advice. His manner, conversation, and social qualities were indeed highly pleasing, and his wit in company so excellent as to extort a smile from the gravest countenance; which caused his presence to be still eagerly desired. While he lived in the country he often spent whole weeks together at the houses of his friends, and at his own lodgings, particularly in Fintona, usually had company every day he was at home, being also remarkable for his hospitality. I was told at Pettigo, that the horses of some gentlemen who had paid him a visit there, when they had gone twelve miles off, immediately on getting loose came galloping back to his lodgings; which shews they were well used there.

It appears he was not one of those recluse sullen scholars that lock themselves up from society; his station requiring him, as he thought, to mix with the world. Having informed him once by letter that I spent my time entirely at my studies, he soon returned the following answer. "Do not "sequester yourself wholly from mankind. From "their vices, follies and dissipations you cannot "keep at too great a distance; but by nature "you must be social; and your gown obliges "you by duty to be still more so, for the spirit of "christianity is a social spirit; and then in an age "so infidel, so wicked, the Lord expects some-"what, let me say, perhaps a great deal from [illegible];

"but without speaking, reasoning, and now and "then even reproving, there is nothing to be got "out of him."

Yet his inclination for company never turned his thoughts aside from his devotions; his private and family prayers being constant and regular. At Fintona it was a custom with him to entertain his visitors for a short time by explaining a certain portion of scripture in a clear simple manner, and making agreeable and improving remarks on it. When he had finished, he conversed on different subjects with his usual pleasantness; for his piety had nothing in it of gloominess or severity, and was free both from superstition and enthusiasm. He therefore could not relish the methodistic rants. Of a certain clergyman who turned methodist and quitted the church he observed, that no one stood more in need of inspiration, for naturally he was a great blockhead.

Yet even a methodist was not more sensible than he of the prevalence of wickedness in the world. I heard him once say in a large company, "The Devil has more authority in this world than some people are apt to think; he is called in scripture the God of this world, the prince of this world, the prince of the power of the air, and accordingly disposes of many places of profit in it, bestowing high offices on persons of his own choosing." Though he disliked faction, he was not blind to the corruptions of a court, and spoke

with a just abhorrence of those men who sell their country for gold.

The most of what little religion remained in the world was possessed, he thought, by the fair sex. "The Turks," he said, "imagine women have no souls, but by their conduct we should suppose it more likely they have them than the men, for they take more care of them." He was remarkably fond of the company of the ladies, though he never had carnal knowledge of a woman, which is rather a singularity in his character. It probably required extreme abstinence, and severe struggles in him to gain such an entire mastery over his passions.

Having sold his library before he came to live constantly in Dublin, he was obliged then to borrow books, of which he got a great variety, and freely gave his opinion of those he read. After reading Tristram Shandy he could not, he said, for two or three days attend seriously to his devotion it filled him with ludicrous ideas. Of a certain dignified author he remarked, that, though a man of learning, he always in his writings put the wrong end of the argument foremost, observing that an argument was like a dart, for if you put the wrong end foremost, it will not hit the object aimed at, but run into your own hand.

There was no living author he had so high an opinion of as Dr. Johnson, whom he called the greatest and best man of the age, and had his

picture hung over the fire-side in the room in which he usually sat. "I have Johnson always before me (he often said) whom I look on as my master, and strive to imitate; when he dies, he'll not leave a man in these kingdoms of deep thinking behind him." Johnson's noted orthodoxy conduced somewhat to increase his good opinion of him. His own violence in this instance was reckoned by some among his defects; though he had a real esteem for any one who acted conscientiously, which he clearly exhibited by offering a part of his income to support Mr. Robertson, a perfect stranger to him, who resigned his living as he could not believe in the Trinity. He railed severely indeed against those clergymen who continue to enjoy the emoluments of an ecclesiastic benefice, and yet disbelieve the doctrines of the church that maintains them.

When I told him once that I had been in company the night before with a man who said he did not believe in hell, "Well," he replied, "tell him the next time he says so, that he'll not believe in it till he feels it; *seeing is believing, but feeling has no fellow.*"

In a candid display of his character and manners it is necessary to observe, that he was rather liable to be deceived by the art of flatterers. He was apt to imagine that those who praised and complimented him possessed more virtues than they could justly claim. This weakness, which was derived from the sincerity of his own mind, caused

him often to have a good opinion of those, whom he found afterwards to be unworthy of his regard. A certain person of polite address was once particularly attentive to him in company, which pleased him so much, that he used to say he was the sweetest and most agreeable young gentleman he ever saw ; but afterwards, when he discovered him to be a deceiver, he said of him, "he is but the shell of a man."

If you once lost his friendship, you could not easily regain it, for he usually suspected you ever after. In his old age, however, he sometimes entertained unreasonable suspicions of mankind. When I observed to him, a short time before his death, that he had got fine cotton curtains to his bed, he replied, "the people who bought these expected I should soon die, and then they knew they would get them to themselves."

Having been appointed, on account of his services to the Magdalen Charity, one of its governors, he attended a public meeting of these, about 1785, where he found some ladies of great consequence, who treated his opinion, he declared, on every occasion, with contempt ; which made him resolve to go near them no more, to which resolution he strictly adhered. The benefits conferred by him on this useful institution entitled him, he thought, to more respect. Yet his suspicions in this instance were founded, I should think, rather on imagination than reality.

It is remarkable, that in his old age he almost entirely got the better of the hypochondriac complaints, to which he was so subject before. In the prime and vigour of life he often imagined he was just going to die, when he had no bodily ailment; yet when he was seized with his last illness, he did not expect it would be the cause of his death. His method of getting rid of a cold was somewhat curious; he lay in bed then, and eat little or nothing, and thus drove it away by hunger. This bears some resemblance to that mentioned by Lucian of a poor man's frightening away a fever by gulping down cold water.

He was also not troubled in his old age with doubts about his salvation, and observed to a friend who mentioned this, that he was now too old to be disturbed by such gloomy apprehensions.

In the course of the narrative, a short account and separate character has been given of each of his works, which consist now of seven large octavo volumes. It only remains to make some general observations on the whole. They discover him to have possessed strong natural powers, which were enriched with a complete knowledge both of sacred and profane literature. Had his taste been equal to his learning and imagination, or had he employed more care in polishing his compositions, they would certainly have been more agreeable, and of consequence more durable. But his arrangement is somewhat confused, and his style,

though strong and masculine, is often harsh and obscure. It is however observable, that the style of his two last volumes is far superior to that of the other five. He seems at length to have been sensible of his defects in this particular, and has been tolerably happy in avoiding them. The style of the last is so different in point of perspicuity from that of the first volume, that if there did not appear a similarity in the mode of thinking, you could scarce suppose them to be both the productions of the same author. The style of his private letters, which are remarkably instructive, is also plain and unaffected ; here he seems to throw aside his stilts, and to walk upon his feet with an easy equable carriage.

If his attempts at wit and irony be sometimes unsuccessful, yet he is scarce ever deficient in good sense, which he draws abundantly from his own natural fund, for he is no servile copier even of the thoughts of others. He is therefore entitled at least to the character of an original writer. His writings are also animated with an ardent zeal for the happiness of his fellow-creatures. The subject on which he employed his pen is of a nature the most noble and excellent, either to prove the truth of divine revelation, or to point out to man the conduct that will render him acceptable to the great Author of his being. From the specimen of his ability in explaining the scriptures exhibited in his *Senilia*, we have reason to lament, that he

did not write a commentary on that sacred volume. If he had, we may suppose he would not have been so tedious and unentertaining as the generality of our commentators, whose dulness and verbosity give us a distaste for a critical study of the holy scriptures.

Though he was so eminent for his pulpit eloquence, his productions in defence of revelation, and the exemplary sanctity of his private life, yet he remained, it has been shown, at least twenty years a curate. At length he obtained, by powerful interposition, a small living from Bishop Clayton in a wild part of the country; where probably he would have continued all his days, had not Providence placed Dr. Garnet in the see of Clogher, who was remarkable for promoting men distinguished for literary qualifications. In the Irish church, it is well known, that fortune or powerful relations are the chief requisites for preferment, and that learning and abilities are too often neglected and disregarded. Had Skelton been born in England, even with the disadvantage of his humble birth, it is allowed, he would have risen to a bishoprick. But his being a native of Ireland, the condition of his parents, and the honest freedom of his language, contributed to prevent his advancement to ecclesiastical honours. It is to be lamented, that the merits of a poor Irish clergyman can hardly be so famed as to reach the royal ear, that lends so favour-

able an attention to literature in the English church.

The following panegyric on Mr. Skelton, taken from the *Philosophical Survey of Ireland*, may naturally be subjoined.

"Mr. Orr, published a volume of Sermons, "which procured him the friendship of Hoadly, "Bishop of Winchester; they discover a free and "original cast of thought, and are composed in a "manly nervous style. The present Bishop of "Clogher, has the honour of promoting him to an "archdeaconry, when he governed the see of Ferns. "And to the same excellent Prelate Mr. Skelton "owes his preferment.

"This gentleman though ungraduated, but as "a Batchelor, by any of the universities, is the "living glory of the Irish church. He has pub- "lished five volumes, mostly in defence of reve- "lation, which, though ably written, shed but a "secondary lustre on the character of this excellent "person, to whom I have had the happiness of "being introduced. His learning is almost uni- "versal, and his language uncommonly fluent and "vigorous; nature formed him a poet, but a bishop "prematurely ordained him a divine; and no "sooner did he assume this function, than his "feeling heart was penetrated by the nicest sense "of duty. He resigned himself wholly to the "service of his master. Such a servant could not "long escape notice; he became eminent; he was

"followed in London as a preacher. He dedicated "two volumes of sermons to the citizens of that "metropolis, at a time when he languished upon "a curacy of forty pounds a year * ; but then he "was as rich as he is now, for he knows no use "of money, but to relieve distress. In one of those "seasons of calamity, which neglect of tillage in "this country renders so frequent, he sold his "books, his only worldly goods wherein he took "delight, to buy bread for the poor. He is now "advancing towards seventy, yet he preserves an "uncommon share of vivacity. If he sometimes "descends into the ludicrous, his flashes of wit "keep *the table in a roar*. His powers of description "are beyond what I could have conceived ; he has "a stock of imagination sufficient to set up ten "modern tragic poets. Had he been educated and "lived in England, a stage little enough for his "great abilities, he would have long since obtained "the first niche in the Temple of fame ; now he is "known only in Ireland, and by a few inquisitive "men elsewhere."

A marble tomb-stone has been placed over him at the expense of Miss Leslie, whom he appointed his residuary legatee, with the following inscription, the composition, it is said, of the Revd. Robert Burrowes, Junior ; Fellow of Trinity College, Dublin.

* This is a mistake ; for he had the living of Pettigo at that time.

"Beneath this stone are deposited the remains of
The Reverend Philip Skelton,
Prebendary of Donacavy in the Cathedral of Clogher,
Who departed this life on the 4th day of May, 1787,
In the 59th year of his Ministry, and 81st of his age.
Liberally endowed by Providence with intellectual
Perfections,
He did not suffer them to lie waste through Inactivity,
Nor did he pervert them by misdirection.
His understanding he habituated to attentive
Reflection,
Invigorating it by exercise and enriching it with
Information.
And pursuing the noblest ends by means the best
Adapted,
He laboured industriously to promote the happiness
Of Mankind,
By advancing the influence of the Christian Religion.
His arguments evinced the reasonableness of its
Doctrines;
While his example showed at once
The practicability and the amiableness of its precepts;
For
As his opinions were orthodox his manners were
Primitive.
His conversation was candid and unreserved;
For he harboured no thought which required
Concealment.
His preaching was forcible and dignified,
Impressing on his hearers the rightful authority of
Virtue,
And with indignant elocution and nervous diction,
Holding out her Adversaries
To contempt and detestation.
Pious without superstition and zealous without
Bigotry;

His life was practical devotion,
And his controversies the earnest efforts of
Philanthropy,
Leading infidels to truth and sinners to salvation.
With a heart which felt for the distresses of the
Indigent,
He had a hand still open to relieve them.
Denying himself even moderate gratifications
That he might more liberally provide for the
Necessities of others.
Without ambition he acquired celebrity,
And without ostentation he long continued to enjoy
It.
A friend to the poor, an ornament to the church,
Admired for his talents and revered for his virtues,
He was at length called to the rewards of a
Patriarchal life,
In the immediate presence of that God,
Whose name he had worshipped with such piety,
And whose word he taught with success."

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